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Wiley



J A D E

BOOKS BY HUGH WILEY

JADE, and Other Stories

LADY LUCK

THE WILDCAT

JADE : and Other Stories

By HUGH ^{or} WILEY

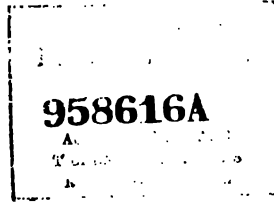


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TO
MY MOTHER

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J A D E

JADE

"Chinatown ain't what she used to be before the fire."
Monte "Grifter" Mahoney.

"GRIFTER" MAHONEY, the San Francisco guide will show you a joss house in Chinatown where the priest who is a duck merchant during the day pays eight hundred dollars a year for his priestly privileges. Mahoney will then lead you through a dark alley where you have to stoop low to avoid hitting a real estate sign. You come out at the entrance to the Chinese Musician's Cellar. The Musician plays "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight" on a flute and it is rotten music.

Five minutes later Mahoney's chilblains began to itch. "That's all there is to see," he says as he pockets your dollar. "Chinatown ain't what she used to be before the fire. Good night."

Sun Kee was born in the Palace of Six Lilies beside West Lake up from Hangchow. Two hours after Sun Kee was born the Prince of the palace died. The dissolution of the Prince's household accomplished through the years. When Sun Kee was ten years old he sensed the dust and decay about him. Carrying a white pigeon in its cage and

a dwarfed pine tree of delightful curves he fled down the Road of Dawning Spring past the Three Silver Pools. He skirted Willow Bay where eagles are heard.

At the Bridge of Late Snow he stopped for a moment listening to the evening bell of South Mountain. Presently he and his pine tree and his white pigeon were in Hangchow. He voyaged the canal to Shanghai, earning his rice at the sweeps of an obstinate house boat whose reluctant hull came to rest near the goldsmith's shop beside the crooked bridge that leads to the Mandarin's Tea House. At the bird market he sold the white pigeon for twelve cents. He gorged heartily on rice which he bought for half a cent and upon the gratifying flesh of a pig which cost him two cents.

For a little while he lived peacefully, enjoying the beauty of the curves of his pine tree and then one day he found himself meshed in the net of demand which the labour boss from one of the steamers had cast into the China sea of human energy.

"Whither are we bound?" he asked a coolie beside him when the ship was at sea.

"Eastward," his companion replied, "to the continent from whence come missionaries."

That night Sun Kee gazed long at the curves of his dwarfed pine tree. "I am but a fleck of froth on the face of the sea of life," he reflected. "I shall

drift with the currents of the sea, nor offer resistance to the winds of chance, for I believe the Scheme is good."

In San Francisco along the lane where Grant Avenue is Chinatown three or four topheavy taxicabs will be moored at evening. Farther up the street two or three black touring cars with curtains down stand by the curb throughout the night. The one-horse cab which was formerly piloted by its owner and proprietor, Lingo Riley, is no more. Riley's nickname is derived from the fact that he has lived in Chinatown many years and that he speaks English fluently in spite of the fact that he is Irish. He believes himself to be a widower but he is not sure about this. He is right however in his assumption, as you shall presently see.

Sun Kee avoided the annoying business of talking to immigration inspectors at Angel Island by the simple expedient of trading clothes and names with a young Chinaman who longed to return to the land of his father's grave. In San Francisco for a little while he was a financial failure, eating irregularly on the strength of odd jobs thrown to him by his countrymen along Dupont Street. He discovered a mine of horned toads on the slope of Telegraph Hill one day and for a little while waxed rich in

his traffic with the apothecary shops of Chinatown.

When he was twelve years old he settled in the regular business of supplying carp to Yip Gee the fish merchant. These carp he caught in the stretches of Suisun Bay. He would float with the tide through Carquinez Strait, skirting San Pablo Point to Angel Island. At Angel Island it was necessary for him to begin rowing with all his strength to keep from being swept through the Golden Gate. A woman's hat blown overboard from an Oakland ferry changed the course of his life. He rescued the hat and sold it for six dollars to a Chinatown merchant whose wife had Western ideas and a streak of vanity.

On the window of a little store next to the jewellery shop owned by Hop Yee there one day blossomed a sign: "Sun Kee Man Hats Woman Hats Cheap." Two or three days each week Sun Kee voyaged diligently from Rincon Point to Goat Island and from Goat Island to the Oakland Mole. On days when the wind was blowing strongly the bottom of his skiff would be covered thick with rescued hats which would presently be dried out and added to the stock on the shelves of the little store adjoining the jewellery shop.

When Sun Kee was twenty years old he sold his hat shop for six thousand dollars. With half of

this money he bought an interest in the jewellery shop next door to the hat store. All of these transactions required considerable scurrying about to offices where lawyers wrote tedious words on white paper and to great stone buildings where languid fat clerks consulted heavy books and smoked cigars. On these voyages into the sea of business Sun Kee employed his friend Lingo Riley whose one-horse cab stood regularly in front of the jewellery shop.

After a year in which the tourist trade in jade and carved soapstone and soft Chinese gold had been exceptionally good, Sun Kee's partner ate so much delicate pork that all the powdered beetles, roasted horned toads and all the dried spiders in three apothecary shops could do nothing for him. On the Night of the Rice Moon his spirit left its grunting residence and winged its way upward to Celestial Skies through a fog almost as dense as the atmosphere of the closed room in which Sun Kee mourned for the associate whose death made him proprietor of the jewellery shop.

On the following day Sun Kee spoke with his friend Lingo Riley. "You bring look-see woman here. Mebbe she buy gold. Mebbe she buy jade. She buy, I pay you."

"I got you," Lingo Riley replied. Thereafter the tourist victims who elected to inspect Chinatown

in Lingo Riley's one-horse hack were invariably advised to buy their jade and Chinese gold at the shop kept by Sun Kee.

In the fertile soil of mutual appreciation the deep exploring roots of friendship between Sun Kee and Lingo Riley extended with the lengthening years. To Sun Kee one day his friend confided that the flame of love for a woman burned strong within his Irish heart. I have eight thousand dollars in the bank and for half of it I can get me a nouse against the hill all fitted up with chairs and china and all the junk a woman means when she says 'home.' "

"And the object of your love?" Sun Kee questioned. "Is she worthy of your illustrious attention?"

"The hands of me are not fit to touch the laces of her little shoes."

On the day that Lingo Riley was married Sun Kee brought to his friend's house five rich gifts of carved jade mounted in soft gold. Two necklaces, two rings and a four-inch statue of Milo Fo, set upon a pedestal of gold whose exquisite workmanship knew no equal East of the treasure room of the palace in the City of Heaven. "These unworthy things," said Sun Kee to the bride, "are but poor expressions of my friendship for your illustrious husband and his house."

The red-headed bride smiled at him. "Much obliged, Mr. Sun," she said. "Is that real gold? Set them on the table. I like opals better than jade."

"A fine way to thank my friend for his gifts," thought Lingo Riley, but he did not voice his sentiment. Six weeks later he changed his mind about his fingers being fit for the business of tying the laces of his lady's shoes. Love's young dream having burned to a cinder with a panful of biscuits the young husband ventured to suggest that a little more attention to the contents of the oven might benefit all concerned. Mrs. Riley, shuffling about in a kimono and a pair of sloppy slippers, cast at her mate's head the first thing which came to her hand. It was her left shoe, the laces of which her husband had considered himself unfit to tie.

Sun Kee was quick to see his friend's unhappiness and with the passage of the weeks he sensed the sorry tale of the losing domestic campaign in which his friend was engaged.

"I, too, am about to take unto myself a bride," he said. "Perhaps in one year, perhaps in two. Who can tell? She is in her father's house in China. Her father tells me that her beauty is one with the radiance of the skies."

Lingo Riley looked sideways at his friend. He spoke slowly. "Take it easy," he said. "You never

can tell about these things. Sometimes I think that a single man has the luck."

Sun Kee smiled quickly. "Love is a lottery," he said, "in which the winner is bound to lose unless he draws first prize."

Lingo Riley left his friend and returned to his home where he enjoyed a poorly-cooked supper and a blast of language from his wife which left him scorched and squirming in the depths of his evening paper.

"Me driftin' around town lookin' like a last year's bird nest without money enough to buy half the clothes I had when I was single and runnin' the switchboard at the hotel!"

Lingo Riley reached into his pocket. "Here is fourteen dollars," he said. "We have one hundred and eighty dollars in the savings bank. Take the pass book tomorrow and get it all." He dived back into the shelter of his newspaper.

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In a room opening from his shop Sun Kee sat at a table. He clapped his hands and an instant later a servant appeared. "Go down the street and say to the old man who writes letters that I wish him to come to this room." A few minutes later the writer of letters was ushered into the room. Sun Kee greeted him. . . "Be seated at this table," he said. "I regret that I should have to trouble you in

the matter of my unworthy correspondence but in my youth my education was in fields apart from books and writing."

The old man spread his paraphernalia upon the table top before him.

"I wish you to write to the father of the bride of my selection," Sun Kee said. "Say to him that the bearer of this letter is a trusted apprentice in my shop and that my instructions will be given verbally by the young man who carries this letter to him."

The old man finished with his brushes and his rows of writing and presently the letter was sealed.

"And now another one," Sun Kee directed. "This is to a lily foot girl whose beauty is the light of a single star in the purple bowl of night. Say to her 'Unbind your feet,' " he dictated. " 'Walk with flat feet. Into the house of your father from me there comes an envoy. The laws of these cities will not permit a woman of your race to enter their forbidden walls. Preserve carefully the papers that are handed to you and the passports that permit a returning to this country. I know thee not, nor have I looked upon thy face but in this empire you will be my equal instead of the dust beneath my feet as custom imposes in the country of my birth. Come unto me. My house awaits its mistress. Without the impulse of thy love my heart is stilled'."

On a day in May, Lingo Riley breakfasted hastily at his house. In a battle of words with his wife which followed breakfast he fought a poor second. "What I need is to get away from this woman and rest up," he reflected. He hitched up the one-horse hack soon after breakfast, much to the surprise of his four-legged associate who had become accustomed to bankers' hours. He drove to Grant Avenue and after a little while he left the hack standing beside the curb in front of Sun Kee's jewellery shop.

He walked down Grant Avenue to Geary Street where he boarded a street car which carried him presently to Lincoln Park. He wandered through the park and flopped down in the lee of a sand dune which breaks down the slope from the sixteenth hole of the golf course. For an hour he lay with his hat over his eyes gazing at the heavy red cliffs against which beat the waters of the Golden Gate. "You've been there a long time," he said half aloud to the solid brown hills which lay before him. "You'll be there a long time yet. Money nor women nor nothing don't worry you."

After a while from the hills about him and the wide waters which stretched away to the West there distilled in his heart the substantial essence of the tranquil earth. He dug his fingers deep into the sand beside him. "Good old dirt," he said . . . "mebbe it's my fault. Mebbe it's natural with

women to be bughouse and queer." His eyes roved seaward. In the sky to the West a cloud of grey smoke drifted from the funnels of a liner heading into the Gate. "The China Mail," Riley said. "That will be the *Tenyo Maru*—a day ahead of her schedule. Here's where I get considerable rustlin' round and considerable silver." He got to his feet and hurried down town.

Sun Kee greeted him in front of the jewellery shop, "Your horse has learned to eat dried fish. I found a boy feeding him sprats a little while ago."

Lingo Riley patted his horse's head and climbed to the driver's seat of the hack. "He's the high-tonedest animal in town. It wouldn't surprise me to see him eating ham an' eggs before long," he said. He drove away.

Hardly had he disappeared when word came to Sun Kee that the *Tenyo Maru* was entering the harbour. "Go at once to the dock," he said to one of his assistants in the shop, "and tell my friend Lingo Riley who drives the black carriage drawn by one horse that I wish to see him at once." The messenger departed and after a while on the Embarcadero he overtook the object of his search. "It's a wonder Sun Kee couldn't have said what he wanted half an hour ago," he grumbled as he retraced his course.

Sun Kee was waiting for him on the street in

front of the shop. "Come with me a moment," he invited. Lingo Riley entered the shop and followed Sun Kee to the room which opened from it.

Sun Kee waved his hand toward a great teakwood chair which sat before an ebony table. "Be seated," he said.

"You sure got this place fixed up swell," Lingo Riley observed.

He looked about him. The walls of the room were hung with pale grey silk. Rugs from the looms of Tientsin covered the floor. In one corner of the room a bronze jar as high as a man's shoulder stood beside an ebony table on which rested a shrine of ivory and pearl and the dwarfed pine tree of delightful curves.

"This room is a painting from my memory of the Prince's breakfast room in the palace where I was born," Sun Kee said. "My father was a boatman on the lily lagoon at Hangchow. My mother waited upon the first wife of the Prince. Other rooms in this house have been created from memories of the palace of the Prince."

Sun Kee seated himself beside the great table in the centre of the room. "You will recall the fact," he said, "that some months ago one of my assistants in the shop, a young boy as tall as that bronze vase in the corner, left San Francisco. This boy journeyed to China. Today on the steamship which

is just now in the harbour he will be returning." Sun Kee looked intently at Lingo Riley. "The boy who returns is the same one who left here except that when he went over he was a boy and now,"—he hesitated—"now that he has come back he is—a girl. The officials of your Government would call this girl the boy's sister and would not permit her to leave the ship. This girl will be my wife. This house is prepared for her coming. If she should be sent to Angel Island,—if it should be discovered that she is a girl, she will be returned to China. You are intimate with the officers of the ship and with the officials of Government at the pier. Contrive to bring my bride to this house and then ask what you will of me and it will be given to you."

Lingo Riley sat silent for a moment. Finally he spoke. "That's a hot one," he said. "It will take fast work. Get me a thousand dollars in fifty-dollar bills and a suit of clothes that will fit this female boy and get 'em quick."

Five minutes later the costume and the currency were delivered into his hands. He put the money loosely in the side pocket of his coat. He removed his coat and vest. About his body he wrapped the boy's suit. "If I'm caught it means a ten-year stretch for me unless you spring me."

Sun Kee smiled at him. "Money will buy any-

thing in China," Sun Kee said, "and in this country it will buy anything but love." Lingo Riley left the room. "Good luck," said Sun Kee.

"The good luck's in fifty-dollar bills," Riley answered.

Twenty minutes later Lingo Riley was on the pier, toward which ever so slowly the *Tenyo Maru* edged from the impulse of two puffing tugs. He got past the inspectors at the gate of the inclosure in the pier shed with a nod and a smile. He paid a word of greeting to the ship's quartermaster at the rail. He made his way below decks. "First class, nix," he said to himself. "Second class double nix. The steerage is the bet."

Five decks down he began his search. Lounging about him in the half light of the steerage were several hundred chattering Orientals,—men from Siam and South China, coolies from the country north of the Yangtze and the scum of a dozen ports from Ceylon to the Sea of Japan. For an hour Lingo Riley ranged up and down these clattering groups of malodorous humanity without success, and then in the cooking quarters he came upon a young Oriental who instinct told him was the object of his quest. For an instant he looked intently into the mask which seemed to film the Chinese eyes. "Sun Kee," he finally whispered.

The eyes of the Chinese girl narrowed quickly.

"Ai," she breathed softly. She looked about her. Lingo Riley retreated to the obscurity of a narrow passage. He beckoned to the Chinese girl. She came toward him. From beneath his vest he drew the costume that he carried. He motioned to the girl. "Put these on," he said in English, and then the incongruity of his speech struck him and he smiled.

The girl took the clothes in her hand. Three minutes later, followed by what appeared to be a young Chinese boy, Lingo Riley was again in the sunlight of the main deck. He picked up half a dozen pieces of baggage from a great pile which lay beside the entrance to the companionway. Three of these he gave to his companion.

"I got two passengers uptown," he said to the quartermaster at the head of the staging which led to the pier. "This boy is helping me." The Japanese sailor nodded and smiled.

"Jimmy, this Chink is a valet for a lime juicer I am hauling uptown," he said to the Custom's inspector at the gate of the fenced area on the pier.

"He can't go through," the Custom's inspector said. Lingo Riley set one of his suitcases on the deck of the pier. He fumbled in his side pocket for a moment. "Here's a frogskin half century that says he can. He's coming back right away."

"See that he gets back. On your way," the Cus-

tom's inspector conceded. Lingo Riley nodded to his companion and the pair walked down the length of the pier shed and into the freedom which lay beyond its portals. The white man called to a porter, who was standing nearby. "Take this baggage back," he said. "I made a mistake. It goes on board the ship. Put it in the big pile at the gangway." The porter staggered away under his cargo.

Lingo Riley turned to his companion. He opened the door to the hack and motioned to the Chinese girl. Twenty minutes later he was clattering up the cobblestones which pave Grant Avenue between Bush and Pine.

Once in a while the best laid plans encounter the wrong woman.

Mrs. Lingo Riley was standing on the corner of California Street. When her husband came within hailing distance she called to him. He pulled up sharply. "Get in darlin'," he said. "I've two blocks to go wid my fare and after that I'll take you for a ride."

Mrs. Riley got into the vehicle. Halfway up the block, from the obscure interior of the hack there came a woman's shriek.

At Sacramento Street Riley pulled up beside the curb. He dismounted and opened the door of his conveyance. "What's the matter?" he asked.

His answer was a crescendo of sobs and shrill broken feminine language. "Me married up wid a dog that goes traffickin' round in Chinese girls in broad daylight!" screamed Mrs. Riley. This was the keynote of her various indictments which persisted until the sidewalk was thronged with spectators.

Detective Sergeant Bell in plain clothes, new to the Chinatown squad, shouldered through to the center of the group. "What's this?" he asked quickly.

Lingo Riley looked at him. Before he could speak his wife interrupted: "Him haulin' a Chink woman around dressed up in men's clothes after tellin' me he never had nothin' to do with 'em." She made a dive for her husband.

The plain clothes man looked at Riley. "What's this about a woman? Where did this,—"

"He ain't no woman, he's a man," Riley broke in.

"He's a dirty, deceivin' liar," Mrs. Riley screamed.

"Get in here," ordered the plain clothes man, motioning to the interior of the hack. "Drive to the Station," he ordered.

"Where did you pick up this Chinese—woman?" the desk sergeant asked.

Riley hesitated in his reply. "I was drivin' along past Pier 42—" he began.

"Have her mugged and shuffle the thumbprint cards," the desk sergeant interrupted. "You can go, Riley," he said.

Ten minutes later the bride of Sun Kee was on her way to the Detention Station at Angel Island. The hysterical Mrs. Riley had returned to her house. Riley's horse, without his driver, wandered from force of habit to his accustomed stand in front of the jewellery shop of Sun Kee. Riley headed for his sanctuary in the sand dunes that lay toward Golden Gate from the sixteenth hole at Lincoln Park.

In the rooms prepared for the coming of his bride, Sun Kee waited alone throughout the afternoon.

From various sources there came to Sun Kee reports of the affair at Sacramento Street. All of these reports translated in the mind of Sun Kee into the simple fact that his bride would be returned to China on the *Tenyo Maru*.

With the idea of lessening the disappointment which he knew his friend must have experienced at the failure of their plans, at morning he dispatched a messenger to the residence of Lingo Riley. "Tell my friend," he said to the messenger "that his horse has been cared for and is standing in front of my shop. Tell him I would speak with him."

The messenger came back with the information

that the white lady had chased him out and that nowhere about the house was there evidence that Lingo Riley was within.

Riley had spent the night on the sand dunes in Lincoln Park. Before noon he made his way to the city and sought the shop of Sun Kee. He entered the shop. "Here is nine hundred and fifty dollars," he said. "I used fifty. That Chinatown cop was a new man to me."

Sun Kee smiled. "At least you tried," he said. "The fruits of success ripen on the Tree of Chance. You go now to your home?"

"Not in a million years," Lingo Riley replied. "Not until the cyclone cools off,—not till I cool off myself. I'm goin' back to the Park and think it over. Mebbe in two or three days I'll go home."

"That is well," Sun Kee agreed. "A moment of anger can cause a thousand years of regret." He fell silent for a moment looking intently at his friend. "In us the East and the West," he said, "have met on the common ground of friendship. Through these many years you have been my friend. Whatever comes to you, know always that your friendship has meant much to me."

Lingo Riley looked at him. "You're a good guy, Sun Kee," he said. "Sometimes I think you're almost white."

Sun Kee smiled slowly. "Perhaps the gods of the Seventh Heaven are colour blind," he said.

Lingo Riley left the shop and in a little while was lounging in his accustomed place in the lee of a bank of sand that sloped down to the Southern hinge of the Golden Gate. "For two cents," he mused, "I'd beat it fer China where a guy can rest—where nothin' never happened and where nothin' never will. Them birds has got it on us some ways. High, low, Jack or the game, however the cards drop they never bat an eye. And all the divorce a Chinaman needs is a stick of stovewood or guts enough to shove his trouble overboard into the lake and hold her under until she quits yellin'."

He lingered in and around the park until the following day before his desire to return to his home found expression in action.

After Lingo Riley left him, Sun Kee dispatched his assistant in search of the old man who wrote letters. In the room opening from the jewellery shop the old man spread his brushes and inks upon the top of the ebony table. "Write a letter addressed to my friend Lingo Riley," Sun Kee dictated. "Write it in the characters of the Cantonese. Say to him these several things." For a little while Sun Kee framed the phrases of the letter to his friend and at his dictation the old man's twinkling brush recorded Sun Kee's words.

"Upon the letter endorse your name," Sun Kee commanded. "The Western laws require witnesses to documents involving property. Here is silver for you in payment," he said to the old man. He gave the writer of letters two silver dollars and walked with him to the front of the shop.

After the old man had left Sun Kee turned to one of his assistants. "Go at once to the office of the steamship company," he directed, "and engage for me two staterooms on the *Tenyo Maru* which sails tonight. The staterooms will be occupied until Shanghai is reached. In one will be a woman of China and in the other the man who shall presently become her husband."

"Returning from the steamship office go to the house of Lingo Riley and say to his wife that I have three opals for her as an expression of my friendship for her husband. Say that I would see her at the third hour after noon. That is all. Make haste."

Sun Kee walked into the apartments which he had prepared for his bride. "The wife of my friend is a woman of low principle," he mused, "and in her selfishness she will accept a gift from the friend of her husband." He walked to the great bronze vase which stood in the corner of the room. He struck it quickly with the tips of his fingers. There sounded a heavy, resonant note through which ever so faintly leaped the whine of over-stressed metal. "The

silver song of the mother," Sun Kee whispered, "and in it the voice of a child."

With a little effort he lifted the tight fitting top of the bronze vase. As the smooth taper of its perimeter broke contact with the vase it shrieked a high pitched note. "The lathework is perfect," Sun Kee observed. "Not even air can penetrate the joint which the artisans so carefully ground. Well may you protest my divorcing you from your appropriate resting place," he said to the cover of the bronze vase, "but in a little while I will replace you."

He opened the door which gave upon the shop. "Bring me a melting block of charcoal," he directed, "a blow pipe and four ounces of fine gold." One of the workmen entered with the apparatus. Sun Kee indicated the table in the centre of the room. "Set it upon the table. Bring me a length of gold chain and the three black opals."

The workman returned in a moment with a chain of yellow gold looped about his hand. In his hand he carried a little box. Sun Kee took the box and opened it. Upon a surface of orange silk, sinister in their mute promise, lay three black opals. Sun Kee placed the box upon the ebony table. He closed the door to his apartment behind him and walked into the jewellery shop.

In a little while his messenger returned. The messenger handed Sun Kee an envelope. "In this,"

he said, "are the tickets and the reservations for two staterooms on the *Tenyo Maru*. The ship is delayed and will sail at midnight tonight."

Sun Kee handed his assistant the letter which the old man had written. "Tomorrow," he directed, "or the day after, I wish you to give this letter to my friend Lingo Riley. Conduct him to the church where the priest of Christianity who reads Chinese can interpret it for him. It is my wish that you read the letter also at that time and obey the instructions which I have written."

As he finished speaking the wife of Lingo Riley entered the door of the jewellery shop. She looked at Sun Kee. "Is that hot air about them opals?" she asked.

Sun Kee bowed before her and smiled blandly. "I have three opals for you," he said. "A gift inspired by my friendship for your husband. The opals are one of two gifts which I shall give you. They are upon the table in the next room," he said. He opened the door which led to the adjoining room. "Will you enter?" Mrs. Riley walked into the room.

Sun Kee followed her. Wide-eyed she turned toward the Chinaman. "My Gawd, I never knew no Chink had a joint as grand as this," she said.

Sun Kee smiled. "A pearl cannot be seen through the shell of the oyster which contains it," he said.

"Be seated." He placed a chair for Mrs. Riley beside the ebony table. "I was about to prepare the gift for you. Perhaps you would like to observe me."

Sun Kee lighted a match and held it for an instant at the tip of the twin tubes of the blow pipe. He flicked the handle of a little valve and a white flame whined sharply into the half light of the room. Sun Kee adjusted the valve in one of the tubes and presently the flame shortened to a finger length. "See," he said. "The heart of this white flame is blue,—and thus with the flame of love,—if it be white, it encompasses the sapphire blue of constancy."

Mrs. Riley looked at him. "Where do you get that stuff!" she said. "Is these the opals?"

"They are the opals. Black as the Siberian night from whence they came. I shall set them in soft gold and link them in this chain." Into a hollow in the charcoal block he threw two ounces of yellow gold. The wife of Lingo Riley across the table watched the operation with growing interest. Sun Kee directed the flame of the blow pipe upon the gold in the hollow of the charcoal block. Presently little areas of charcoal about it began to ignite. The invisible gases of combustion leaped across the table and whirled about the face of the wife of Lingo Riley. "Gee, its hot in here," she said.

Sun Kee opened the valve of the twin tubes a little wider.

Thirty seconds later the wife of Lingo Riley reached her left hand slowly across the table toward the opals. "My Gawd, it's hot in here!" she began. Heavily and with every surrendering muscle of her body confessing the coarse fibre of its origin she rolled to the corner of the ebony table and fell to the floor.

Sun Kee continued to direct the flame of the blow pipe at the gold in the hollow of the charcoal block. He glanced sideways once at the woman inert on the floor. "The fumes of burning charcoal," he mused, "would rival opium except that with their gift of sleep dreams do not come."

The gold in the hollow of the charcoal block became liquid. In it there glowed a dull green light. Sun Kee reached quickly for a heavy agate cup which was upon the table. He poured the liquid gold into this cup.

He knelt beside the senseless form of the wife of Lingo Riley. "Drink this," he whispered. "It is a cup of gratitude. Drink to my friendship for the man whom you would have destroyed."

The liquid gold plunged in a green arc into the woman's open lips.

Presently the pungent smell of burning tissues dissolved into the heavy air. Sun Kee knelt again

beside the inert woman. He lifted her in his arms and walked toward the bronze vase which stood in the corner of the room. With difficulty he placed the wife of Lingo Riley in this vase.

He returned to the ebony table and brought the twin tubes of the blow pipe to the vase. Upon the smooth perimeter of its wide mouth for a little while there played the white flame which sprang from the tips of the blow pipe. Then quickly this flame was extinguished. Sun Kee lifted the top of the bronze vase and with a quick twist set it tightly in place. "The vase will contract when it cools," he said, "and the seal will be perfect."

From a drawer in a shrine which stood against the wall he removed a tightly bound package of bank notes. "Sixty thousand dollars,—twelve years," he reflected. He put the money into his pocket.

He walked to the door of the apartment and opened it. "You may remove these tools," he called to one of the workmen. The white lady went away, —by another exit."

At eleven o'clock, carrying the little dwarfed pine tree of delightful curves Sun Kee left his shop and a little while was on board the *Tenyo Maru*. On the steamer he spoke softly to the Chinese girl beside him. "Thy hands are the white jade of the Seventh Paradise. The sound of thy feet walking

toward me is the whisper of lily blossoms at evening.
Thy voice is the echo of a silver bell. The light of
thine eyes is moonlight dying in the rose of dawn."

Half an hour after midnight Lingo Riley, sleeping uneasily in his sanctuary in the lee of a sand dune which sloped toward the Golden Gate, suddenly awakened. He batted his eyes once or twice into the darkness and then his vision focused upon the lights of a steamer moving Westward over the black tide which swept seaward below him.

"China bound," he whispered. "I wish to God I was on you!" For a little while he watched the lights of the steamer and then he fell asleep.

At dawn a sense of loneliness came to him. He made his way to the city, resolved to continue in his search for happiness with the woman he had married. When he arrived in front of Sun Kee's shop where he went to retrieve his horse and the hack which had been standing there through the night, a boy from inside the shop beckoned to him. He walked into the shop.

The boy handed him the letter. "Sun Kee go China. He say this fo' you." At nine o'clock the proprietor of a Chinese newspaper translated the letter for Lingo Riley. "In this letter Sun Kee gives you his business and his jewellery shop and all the gold and jade in the shop. He gives you the build-

ing itself which he owns, and the furnishings of his apartments,—everything. Save this letter carefully. It is what the American lawyers would call a deed to property.”

Lingo Riley drove in wild haste to tell his wife of the good fortune that had suddenly come to them. He looked for her in their house. He spoke her name, softly at first . . . but no voice answered him.

Now and then Monte “Grifter” Mahoney, the San Francisco guide will stop in front of the jewellery store of Sun Kee. “This here is a Chinese jewellery factory,” he will announce. “It is run by an Irishman that used to drive a hack around here. Some folks say he’s crazy . . . Chinatown ain’t what she used to be before the fire.”

JOSS

JOSS

AT midnight Ming Sun Tai looked out upon Market Street from a window of a room in the Palace Hotel. In the room with him was a hypocrite Hindu and eight American Christians. Ming Sun Tai was the tenth member of the Finance Committee of the Associated Foreign Missions.

The lights along the street were soft in the fog which lay over San Francisco. "This will be a good night for sleeping," thought Ming Sun Tai. He yawned and realized his seventy years. He opened his check book on his knee and wrote a check for three thousand dollars. He addressed the chairman of the meeting:

"Miss King," he said, "the bank of California will honour this check. It is for the balance required for our next year's work in China. If I may be excused now, I will accept the gift of sleep with which the Gods of Night pay for the work of the day." He bowed to the chairman and again to the assemblage and left the room.

In the lobby of the hotel Ming Sun Tai paused a moment to speak with the bell captain. "Fog lies over the city," he said. "When Senator King's

daughter comes from the meeting of Christian Missions, conduct her to my limousine. I will walk to my home."

He crossed Market Street and presently came upon the cobblestones that paved the incline of Grant Avenue from Bush to Pine. Halfway up this incline, Ming Sun Tai read six words painted in white on the broken stone steps of a house that had died with the embers of an unkind year. "Fools make a Mock at Sin."

The surface of the broken sidewalk alternated from concrete to asphalt. Ming Sun Tai noticed that the concrete was slippery with the moisture of the fog. He walked in the middle of the street. Through his light shoes the uneven cobblestones twisted his old feet.

On a sidewalk stone near Pine Street he read a second admonition: "Drunks Seek Jesus."

At California Street he looked at Sing Chong's store to his left. On his right stood St. Mary's church. Under the clock of the church in gold letters was this further good advice: "Son, observe the Time and Fly From Evil." Ming Sun Tai looked at his watch. "Fly fast," he said half aloud. "The clock is three minutes slow."

He waited in front of Sing Fat's store until a clattering cable car leaped out of the fog and dived again into the mist which lay below. In the wake of

the car was a whirl of dust and fluttering scraps of paper. At the feet of Ming Sun Tai there fell a yellow square paper. He picked it up.

"Quong Lee Night Time," he read. "Ten Thousand Dollars." In the green square below these words were ten vertical rows of eight Chinese characters. Twenty little holes had been punched in the paper. "The gods of chance have spoken," whispered Ming Sun Tai. "I shall obey them."

He walked rapidly to Clay Street. Eighty feet from the corner he dived down six steps and knocked at a closed door. An old woman's thin voice spoke a sharp question from beyond the door. "It is Ming Sun Tai," he said softly. The sound of three lifted wooden bars came to his ears, and then the click of a bolt. The door opened. "You should be in bed, Mama Chong. It is late for an old woman to be awake."

The Chinese woman answered him. "The Favourite of Heaven must make haste. Within the hour the Gods of Luck will speak."

Ming Sun Tai walked eighty feet in the dark down the littered length of a narrow passageway. His name whispered at a second door gained him admittance to a room wherein were grouped a hundred Chinamen. The air, heavy with tobacco smoke, carried the acrid tang of opium.

Ming Sun Tai walked to the corner of the room.

"Here is one dollar," he said. "Give me a winning ticket." He walked to a little table beside the wall and marked his ticket with a pointed brush. He handed the marked ticket to a Chinaman behind a barred window on the opposite side of the room.

Twenty minutes later the lottery bank paid him two thousand dollars. He looked at the cashier's immobile face. "Easy money," he said in English. He put the roll of bills in his overcoat pocket and walked from the room. He retraced his steps along Grant Avenue until he came to the corner of Washington Street wherein lay his residence.

On Washington Street he paused a moment to read the red paper bulletins pasted on the brick wall of the store which stands there. In the gutter a flaring fire burned in an open coal oil tin. Various shuffling Chinamen stopped before the fire for a moment to drive the chill of the fog from their flapping clothes. Now and then one of them cast the pieces of a broken box into the fire.

Out of the fog toward Ming Sun Tai there came a little old Chinaman. He stopped beside his countryman. Presently Ming Sun Tai spoke to him. "What would you say to me?"

"Excellency," the beggar began, "since yesterday I have not eaten. The marrow of my bones is cold. The soul of my body cries for the smoke of the black gum."

"What did you do with the overcoat I gave you last week?" questioned Ming Sun Tai.

"Excellency, I sold it for three pieces of silver. With the silver I bought opium," the old man answered.

"Ai!" Ming Sun Tai was silent for a moment. Then quickly he removed his overcoat. He placed it about the shoulders of the little old Chinaman. "Take this, and may the fangs of the ice gods fasten upon you if you sell it. Go to the house of Lo Yen Sang and say that it is my wish that he supply you with a five tael tin of opium."

Ming Sun Tai turned and walked rapidly down Washington Street to his home. Below him in their fleece of fog the sentinel trees of Portsmouth Square stood ghostly in the opal night. Across the Square a dim blue light burned over the door of the jail.

Ming Sun Tai entered his house. In an apartment opening from his bedchamber on the second floor he lay down upon a great divan over which hung a canopy of yellow silk. He closed his eyes. Over him his servant spread a quilted coverlet. He lay inert for a period of five minutes. Then suddenly he sat upright. "My feet hurt," he said to his servant. "You may remove my shoes." The servant removed his master's shoes and brought in their stead a pair of black silk slippers. Ming Sun Tai

rose to his feet. "Bring me my robes for the night's devotions," he directed.

From a cabinet against the wall the servant brought out a red mandarin coat, the surface of which was covered with an intricate embroidery of black and gold. Ming Sun Tai placed a little round cap upon his head. From a table nearby he lifted a one stringed banjo. The neck of this banjo was fixed to an ebony bowl on which was stretched a section of the polished skin of a snake. Painted in bright vermilion on this covering was a single character. On the index finger of his right hand Ming Sun Tai placed a jade thimble which terminated in a claw of gold. He turned to his servant. "You may prepare my bed and then go to your rest."

Ming Sun Tai made his way through three rooms until he came to a narrow door of inlaid ebony. This he unlocked with a key which lay close to the jade seal that hung from his watch chain. He entered a room about ten feet square, the walls of which were of carved teakwood overlaid with gold leaf. From a shrine against the wall opposite the door of the room smiled the Buddhist Messiah, Milo Fo. Flanking this idol sat three Taoist deities. Beside one of the idols of Lao Tze was a crucifix from which there hung a rosary. Below it stood a white jade statue of Confucius. Above the shrine in which rested two plates of gold carved with the

legends of the two ancestral names of the family of Ming Sun Tai, there stood a silver incense burner. On each side of it was a silver candlestick, and beside these candlesticks were two flower vases in each of which at the moment was a single lily blossom, white and heavy with fragrance.

Ming Sun Tai touched an eye of the gilt tiger carved in the wood of the shrine. From beneath the silver incense burner there slowly protruded a shallow drawer. The drawer was lined with crimson silk. In it lay coiled a necklace of fine steel. At one end of the necklace was a little hook. Near the other end of it, at intervals of an inch, four flaming jewels were set,—a sapphire, an emerald, a ruby and an orange coloured diamond.

Ming Sun Tai picked up the necklace. "Yellow for Earth, the ruby for the Sun, for the Green Moon the emerald and sapphire blue for the Celestial skies. This is the night of the First Moon." He placed the necklace about the neck of the smiling Milo Fo. "The night of the Green Moon," he said. The fine steel hook was caught in the link of the necklace from which hung the emerald.

He lighted one of the two candles which stood before the shrine. He turned and closed the door which was open behind him. Smoke from a stick of incense spun softly upward from its quickened spark. "Pai seung tai," the Chinaman whispered.

"Beloved Parent, now in this night of memories unto you shall rise the incense of my devotion." The eyes of the smiling Milo Fo glowed in the light of the burning candle.

Ming Sun Tai picked up the one stringed banjo. In the silence there struck four sharp successive notes that leaped from the vibrating string. He held the banjo near to the burning candle. The gold claw on the jade thimble touched the banjo string. To the whine of the ensuing note the thin flame of the candle wove its sinuous way upward through the pulsing air. The glittering eyes of Milo Fo seemed to smile as the little wrinkles about them quivered in the flickering candle light.

Ming Sun Tai bowed low and drank deep of the tone which sounded from the banjo. He stood erect. " 'Nam Soy Sing Yan'—A man becomes his own master. 'As it was in the beginning, world without end. Amen'."

He lifted the necklace from about the neck of the smiling Milo Fo and replaced it in the secret drawer. He opened the door of the room. A soft light floated in. He walked to the shrine and extinguished the burning candle. "Beloved father of my childhood days," he breathed, "may the raptures of Paradise be forever thine." The spark of incense died. The end of the thread of spinning smoke snapped upward into the shadows.

Ming Sun Tai walked through the door of the room and closed it after him. In his bedchamber he discovered his servant still awake. "It is the second hour of morning," he said. "Have you no desire for sleep?" He handed the servant the one stringed banjo which he carried. "Master," the servant said, "Loy Yick, the beggar to whom you gave your greatcoat asked me to return this money to you before I slept."

Ming Sun Tai took the roll of bills which he had won in the lottery. "The Winds of Chance," he reflected, "dispose of the Mantle of Honesty."

. . .

Two miles South of Dutch Flat the exploring sun tilted over Moody Ridge and dived down the slope into Canyon Creek.

A ray of the sunlight lost its energy in the labyrinth of a chinful of cool grey whiskers which stuck out of one end of a blanket cocoon which lay in the sand beside the creek.

Presently the chrysalis moved gently. "Ow—oo—Wow!" Old Moccasin West indulged in a gratifying lungful of morning air. He rolled slowly out of his blankets and reached for a pair of broken shoes which lay beside him. He put on the shoes and raked together the embers of the fire which had smouldered through the night. He picked up a battered coffee pot. He walked to where the dimin-

ished waters of Canyon Creek threaded their way through the gravel and boulders of the creek bed. With the coffee pot he dipped up a pint of water.

He walked back slowly to the fire. He threw a tablespoonful of coffee into the coffee pot. He cut three slices of bacon from a slab of it which lay under its canvas wrapping on a rock beside him.

Presently his breakfast was accomplished. For a time he sat lazily beside the dying breakfast fire. After a little while he lighted a pipe and reached for a short handled pick which lay beside him. A shallow gold pan, rusted with the dew of night lay near the fire. He kicked this into the embers and let it lie until whatever grease might have sputtered into it from the frying bacon would be burned out. He picked up the pan and made his way with laboured difficulty up the rough bed of Canyon Creek. Age was in every movement. His thin old voice lifted a quavering interrupted song:

“For sixty years I’ve shed the tears
What follers blasted hopes.
When I hit gold I spent it bold,—
By Gad! I knows the ropes.”

Slowly he wandered around the bend where the stream swung to the East. Old Moccasin West had staked discovery on a dozen creeks since ’51, but the gold had never stuck. “Sixty years ago,” he mumbled to himself, “she run a million to the acre

in here. Now, dang 'er, she's rich ground if she pans a horn toad to the square mile."

He sat down for a little while with his back to the rays of the warm sun. "These dang nights is nippy up here, in spite of it bein' summer," he said aloud. "I'll have to haul my ol' carcass to San Francisco and get me a job where it's warm before long. But gosh how I hates crowds of folks. City folks that is." He refilled his pipe, which had gone out. He lighted it and sat cross legged, gazing vacantly into the creek bed and the placer scarred flat beyond.

Then suddenly he jumped to his feet. He reached for the pick which lay beside him. He grabbed the gold pan with his left hand. As fast as his limping feet could travel he hobbled out of the bed of Canyon Creek. He trotted breathlessly across a thousand feet of rough open ground. He came upon an area of ground two hundred feet wide which rose squarely eight or ten feet above the country about it. This undisturbed area carried a thick growth of an underbrush from which lifted the green masses of a dozen tall trees. The old man clawed violently with his pick against the upper face of the gravel bank.

"Sixty years them danged stiffs has laid here dead," he breathed, "and nobody never thought of it before." The compact gravel bank of the isolated area lay exposed before him. He picked up the

gold pan and scraped it heavily against the face of the grave until it was half filled. He retraced his steps toward the waters of Canyon Creek. In the lee of a great boulder he dipped the edge of the gold pan under the surface of the eddying current. He clawed deep in the clouded slush of the pan, casting out the larger pieces of gravel as his trembling fingers encountered them. Carefully he trailed the remaining contents of the pan around the perimeter of its dished interior.

In the tail of the stringing sand that raced in the groove of the pan, he saw coarse gold. Between two pebbles in the pan there lay a yellow nugget. "Damn me to hell!" he exulted. "A buckshot slug! Discovery Thirteen,—an' a graveyard bonanza!" In five seconds his manner changed. "Steady, you ol' fool," he whispered. "The woods has eyes."

He made his way quickly to the site of his camp. He scooped out a hole in the sand with his gold pan, and in it he buried his blankets and his little supply of food. He retrieved the short handled pick and carried it a little way downstream where with the coffee pot and the gold pan it was submerged in the deep pool. He left the ashes of his camp fire and the other evidences of his visit without making any attempt to conceal them. At eleven o'clock he boarded the southbound train at Gold Run.

At ten o'clock that night he crossed from Oakland,

and walked into the Ferry Building at the foot of Market Street in San Francisco. Twenty minutes later he transferred from a Sacramento Street car to Hyde Street. At eleven o'clock he rang the bell at the entrance of Senator King's elaborate residence on Russian Hill.

"Tell Old Man King that Moccasin West wants to see him," he said to the man at the door.

"The Senator is not in," the servant replied.

"I'll wait until he comes in," the old man said. "If his girl Miss 'Lizbeth is here, I'll talk to her until he gets back."

"Miss King has retired for the night," the servant said.

"Tell her that Moccasin West is here," the old man commanded. "She'll git up."

On a day early in August, Ming Sun Tai summoned his secretary. "Please have the big touring car here at one o'clock this afternoon," he directed. "I shall journey to the hills of yesterday's treasure gold and kneel at the grave of my father. You will accompany me."

Alone, Ming Sun Tai set about the business of packing the impedimenta of his various religions. In a suitcase he placed the one stringed banjo. Around the neck of it he coiled the beads of the rosary. Beside it, wrapped about the little statue

of Milo Fo was a prayer rug. These things he placed compactly in one end of the suitcase and against them, wrapped in squares of beaded yellow silk he packed a silver incense burner, two candlesticks and two silver flower vases. In the corner of the suitcase he placed a little case containing the steel necklace which carried the sapphire, the ruby, the emerald and the diamond. He wrapped a yard of raw silk about a crucifix. Over the contents of the suitcase he laid two flat ivory tablets on which were engraved the legends of his two ancestral names.

In another suitcase he placed the box of cigars, twelve pounds of roast pork still warm from the ovens of his kitchen, a roast chicken and two roast ducks.

At one o'clock Ming Sun Tai descended to the street where before his house his touring car awaited him. His secretary, Gee Lum, sat beside him.

"We will go by way of Stockton," Ming Sun Tai directed, "and through Colfax to Gold Run."

In the Senator's residence Moccasin West greeted Senator King with a respectful familiarity derived from an acquaintance of many years. The old man proceeded directly to business.

"Savin' the Bear Crick deal, which I'd ought to have knowed better, account of it bein' a ledge

proposition, I never rung no false alarms or bought no chips in no game what didn't pan. I made twelve strikes. This thirteenth discovery, graveyard though she be, is the biggest of all of 'em." His voice trembled in his excitement.

"Steady down," the Senator counseled. "Steady down and tell me about it. Have a drink. This was good bourbon before we saw the Centennial Show."

The old man waved the drink aside. "I quit four years ago," he said, "when I went broke and got religion. In '51 she run a million to the acre South of Dutch Flat. Coarse gold from the grass roots down." His voice was laboured. "And boy! there's an acre that ain't never been touched,—the acre where the smallpox gang from the Bear Crick placers was buried in '52. There's a million dollars waitin' there but she needs to be legislated loose,—and a quick cleanup."

Senator King jumped to his feet. "Great God, Moccasin!" he exclaimed. The Senator gulped the drink which he had offered his companion a little while before. Then for a space of ten minutes he was silent. He spoke slowly. "Stake it," he said. "Stake it as quick as you can get back. Clean up as quick as you can. I will have your crews started in there tomorrow, and I'll square the legal end of it

at the next Session. We play it fifty-fifty after the bills are paid."

The old man stuck out his hand. "You an' me,—equal shares. That's done!" He breathed heavily. "Boy, I feel backslid enough to take a drink of that liquor now."

An hour later Moccasin West lay drunk in one of the guest rooms of Senator King's residence on Russian Hill.

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At twilight, in the placer-scarred bed of Canyon Creek South of Dutch Flat, Ming Sun Tai lighted a stick of incense from the glowing end of his fifty cent cigar. The incense burned dull red at the origin of the twisted thread of smoke which spun in the early moonlight that lay on the Western slope of Moody Ridge. He set the stick of incense on a grey boulder and fixed it upright with three little pebbles.

"Pai seung tai," the Chinaman whispered. "In the love of a man's ancestors, he accomplishes the worship of the gods." He continued his course up the bed of Canyon Creek. A thousand feet farther on he lighted another stick of incense. To his left lay a half mile of open flat, slashed and bruised and welted from the conflict which had waged in the days when yellow gold lay from the grass roots to bedrock beneath.

Rising abruptly from the disturbed terrain about it, an area of ground two hundred feet square lay black beneath the trees which grew upon it. Across the flat toward this ground walked Ming Sun Tai. The loose gravel rolled under his feet as he climbed the six foot slope which led to the shadows that fell from the silent trees. A little ledge of soil laced with roots rose in a three foot face vertically before him. He gained the crumbling edge. For a moment he stood at his full height with his arms raised above him. He looked to the South where in the evening sky hung the August moon.

"Nam Soy Sing Yan," he breathed. "Sleeping near me in his grave rests the beloved father whom I knew in childhood." He called to his secretary standing on the slope below him.

"Hand me the suitcase," he said. "Wait where you are for me. Before the new day dawns I shall have completed my devotions."

Eighty feet into the pool of darkness beneath the sentinel trees Ming Sun Tai looked above him, and traced against the lighted sky the branching silhouette of a great pine. Near the base of this tree, beside a weathered mound of earth, he set the suitcases down. He opened one of them and from it he removed two ducks, the chicken and the twelve pound piece of roast pork. He placed this food at the head of the mound of earth. From the other

suitcase he removed the two flat ivory tablets on which were engraved the legends of his ancestral names. He fixed these upright at the foot of the mound of earth. He removed the silk winding sheet from about the crucifix. He set the crucifix between the two ivory tablets. He removed the statue of Milo Fo, and after spreading out the prayer rug in which the statue was wrapped, he set the small idol upright before the crucifix.

About the neck of the statue there hung the rosary. "Each of the rivers of righteousness," he whispered, "has its source in the lake of Heaven." On the prayer rug in front of the statue of Milo Fo he placed the silver incense burner, the two candlesticks and the two silver flower vases. He lighted one of the yellow candles. For a moment he held a stick of incense in the candle flame. He placed the burning incense in the silver receptacle.

For an hour he knelt before this shrine, silent except for the whispered phrases of his various rituals. He lighted the candle in the second candlestick and extinguished the first one. He picked up the banjo with the single string. He held the banjo near to the lighted candle. From the tense string there sounded the whine of a sharp note. The flame of the candle quivered its response. In the unsteady light the little wrinkles about the glowing

eyes of the image of Milo Fo danced in the semblance of a smile.

About his own neck Ming Sun Tai placed the steel necklace and its four pendant jewels. The little steel hook clicked into the link from which the sapphire hung. "Thy spirit lives," he said. "From thy throne beside the Gods of Yesterday look now upon thy son. Here in the darkness sleeps the clay that was thy temporary resting place. A little while, Illustrious One and my unworthy soul shall join its source in the infinite blue of the sapphire skies"

The East was grey. Ming Sun Tai extinguished the candle. Presently the miscellany of his several religions was replaced in the suitcase. He made his way to the edge of the oasis of underbrush where his secretary waited for him. "We will return to San Francisco now," he said to Gee Lum.

Before the pair had moved a thousand feet down the bed of Canyon Creek an army of ants had opened an attack upon the two roast ducks. The twelve pound roast of pork which lay near the head of the mound of earth fell prey to the fangs of a prowling coyote.

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Moccasin West and a crew of twenty men got off the Eastbound train at Gold Run three hours before

Ming Sun Tai and his secretary drove upon the ferry at Oakland. At Gold Run various pieces of crated machinery were unloaded from the express car. Besides the machinery there were four heavy boxes of tools, ten thousand fire bricks, a cook stove, a thousand pounds of groceries and thirty kegs of spikes. On the road leading from Gold Run to Dutch Flat, opposite the sawmill near Little York, twelve truckloads of lumber awaited the orders of Moccasin West. Leading the convoy of loaded motor trucks were five light steam shovels each in the wake of a vicious looking gasoline tractor.

At nine o'clock that night in the flare of a string of carbide lights a thousand foot flume had been built along the bed of Canyon Creek.

Five days later half of the area of the oasis about the grave of the father of Ming Sun Tai had been robbed of its gold by the sluices that lay beyond the flume. Moccasin West wrote a telegram that night addressed to Senator King. "Better than an ounce to the yard," he advised. "Will clean up next week."

One week later Senator King's car drove through the red dust that lay on the road beyond Gold Run. A little beyond the place where the wagon road crosses the railway, halfway between Gold Run and Dutch Flat, the Senator stopped. From a shack through the roof of which rose the stack of a tem-

porary furnace. Moccasin West stepped forth. He greeted the Senator with an announcement of success. "The cleanup makes fifteen thousand ounces. I just finished meltin' up the last bunch of dust. We got nearly a thousand pounds of bullion."

The Senator held out his hand. "Shake!" he said. "You're a whirlwind. Load it up and let's get out of here."

Chin Sang, the cake-baking pride of Pine Tree Lodge, cooked a pill of good black opium in his room which opened off the kitchen which he ruled. With the reaction of his third deep drag the fatigue of eighty years of withering life on earth was forgotten.

Chin Sang stowed his pipe away and dressed himself in a pair of substantial new overalls and a new blue denim jumper. On his number seven feet he wore a pair of comfortable number twelve black shoes. He picked up a high crowned black felt hat. Feeling himself ornately dressed, he sought the proprietress of Pine Tree Lodge. "Miss Fan, I go San Francisco," he said abruptly. "Come back fo' day."

The lady boss looked at him. "You are a month fast," she objected. "You're not due to go to San Francisco until September."

"Come back fo' day," the monarch of the kitchen repeated. "Goo-bye."

"The damned heathen!" thought the lady boss.

"I should worry," reflected Chin Sang. He boarded a train and sought seclusion in the heavy, homelike air of the smoking car where like an old beetle he sat quietly until he arrived at Oakland. He crossed the Bay and walked up Sacramento Street from the Ferry Building in San Francisco. He turned on Grant Avenue and presently on Washington Street he stood at the entrance of the residence of Ming Sun Tai.

"Say that I would have speech with the Honorable One," he directed when the door was opened.

Ming Sun Tai received the old man in a great room wherein an open fire burned brightly on a green stone hearth. Chin Sang proceeded directly to business.

"Last week the grave of your father was destroyed," he said. "The earth about it has been washed away by a group of men in quest of the gold that the ground contains."

Ming Sun Tai received this news in silence, and then in a voice stressed with an emotion which taxed his power of control, "Tell me in detail what you know," he directed.

Chin Sang gave him the facts as he had learned them. "The organization was directed by a miner of the old days,—a prospector whom I have known

for many years. His California name is West. They call him Moccasin West."

Ming Sun Tai summoned his secretary. "Who is the man from whom a prospector by the name of West obtains his financial backing?" The secretary left the room. He returned five minutes later. "The miner, Moccasin West, was a guest at the house of Senator King sixteen days ago. On the morning of his departure for Gold Run he cashed a check for twelve thousand dollars. The check was signed by Senator King."

Ming Sun Tai addressed his countryman who had journeyed from Pine Tree Lodge. "Return to your work," he said. "My secretary has a gift of gold for you." The cake-baking king of Pine Tree Lodge left him.

Ming Sun Tai sat alone for the space of an hour, then abruptly made his way to the entrance hall of his house. He put on a shabby overcoat and a battered grey cap and walked into the night. Six minutes after midnight he ascended a dark stairway leading from a door that opened on Ross Alley. Halfway up these stairs he stopped. His exploring fingers brushed lightly over the rough wallpaper. They encountered a ridge where the paper lay over a string that had been stretched on the surface of the plastered wall before the paper had been pasted thereon. His fingers followed this ridge to its end.

He pressed lightly on the flat surface. Behind him, on the opposite side of the stairway, a door opened. He turned and entered this door.

Twelve minutes later he returned to his home. "Tomorrow night," he said to his secretary, "at eight o'clock Senator King and his daughter will call at this house. I will receive them in this room. At some hour tonight the Senator will arrive from the gold hills in Placer County. He is driving a dark blue touring car. With him, besides his chauffeur, is one man. There is a thousand pounds of gold bullion in the car. Without injury to the Senator or either of his companions see that this gold is removed from the car. Place it in the room of my devotions beneath the shrine of Milo Fo. I suggest that the work be accomplished in the shadows of the Ferry Building at Oakland."

On the following day the afternoon papers blazed with an inaccurate account of the bullion robbery.

At four o'clock Ming Sun Tai telephoned to Senator King. "It will give me great pleasure if you and your daughter will dine with me at my residence tonight. I wish to discuss the subject of foreign missions with her, and with you,"—he paused,—“perhaps I can help you find the gold which you have lost.”

That night at eight o'clock, besides the Senator

and his daughter, Ming Sun Tai entertained another guest. "Song Lee," he said in introducing his countryman, "is the character actor of Canton." Miss King smiled sweetly at Ming Sun Tai's guest. "How interesting. Do you speak English?" she asked.

"I was educated at Oxford," Song Lee replied.

For a little while the Senator held forth on the topic uppermost in his mind. "Come easy go easy," he said. "Three hundred thousand dollars don't worry me much but I hate to look like a damn fool, and old Moccasin West promises to drink himself into an early grave at the age of seventy if we don't find the gold."

Ming Sun Tai smiled slowly. "You will find the gold. There are many things in life that mean much more than gold. Work is the greatest thing, —then love. Come with me," he said to the Senator. "You are just now under great mental stress. I would show you the way to peace."

The Senator followed Ming Sun Tai until they came upon the narrow door of carved ebony which opened into the little room wherein were the several deities. The Chinaman reached for a red silk coat which hung against the wall. "Put this about you," he said to the Senator. "On your head wear this mandarin cap. There, you are quite transformed. Be seated on that cushion."

Ming Sun Tai touched the eye of the gilded tiger carved in the wood of the shrine before them, and from beneath the silver incense burner there slowly appeared the shallow drawer in which lay coiled the necklace of steel with its four flaming jewels. He lighted both of the candles which stood before the shrine. Smoke from a stick of incense spun softly from its glowing spark.

With the little steel hook, Ming Sun Tai fastened the necklace about the throat of Senator King. "Wear this," he said. "The diamond is for Earth, the ruby for the Sun, green moonlight shines from the emerald, and in the blue of the sapphire is the radiance of the Celestial Skies. And now, for a little while remain here in meditation. Presently I will return."

Ming Sun Tai left the shrine room and sought Miss King and the character actor of Canton in the drawing room. After a moment the actor left them.

"I have dreamed of a world," said Ming Sun Tai, "in which love would find expression in unselfishness. We possess life in its approximate perfection. We enjoy our right to life only after we buy it,—after we pay the unit instalments of our moral obligations,—day by day and year by year, as long as life endures."

For a little while they talked together. They were interrupted by the servant of the house. "The

Senator's chauffeur wishes to speak with Miss King," the servant announced. The man was admitted. "I have been away for a few minutes, Miss King," he said. "I just now returned from taking Senator King to the Southern Pacific Station at Third and Townsend. He said to tell you that he did not know just when he would return."

At the moment, in the shadows of the trainshed of the Southern Pacific Station at Third and Townsend, Song Lee, the character actor of Canton was removing the putty and wax and the paints which had given his face the semblance of that of Senator King.

The Senator's chauffeur withdrew. "The teachings of Christianity are beautiful," Ming Sun Tai continued to the Senator's daughter. "To the practical moral code of Confucius they add the crowning quality of spiritual perfection." He opened his check book. Presently he handed Miss King a check for three hundred thousand dollars. "Accept this," he said. "It is my wish that the interest from this money be used under your direction for the work of the Christian missions in China. You will excuse me now? I shall escort you to your car."

After Miss King departed Ming Sun Tai made his way to the shrine room of his ancestral devotions. "Now," he said to Senator King who was seated before the shrine, "we will continue in our search

for peace." His hand reached for a crimson cloth which hung to the floor from the edge of the shrine. Quickly he snatched the cloth away. Piled solidly on the enamelled tiles of the floor lay the bricks of gold bullion. In his surprise the Senator leaned forward. Ming Sun Tai stepped close beside him. The Chinaman's swift fingers reached for the little steel hook of the necklace. He removed it quickly from the diamond of Earth. The hook clicked sharply into the link above the Sapphire of the Skies.

Ming Sun Tai stepped backward through the narrow door. It closed behind him. . . Presently the eyes of Milo Fo smiled upon the Senator's livid face. The fine steel links of the necklace were buried deep in the congested flesh of the Senator's throat. For a little while the Sapphire of the Celestial Skies pulsed in unison with the futile surges of the Senator's heart. Then finally it was still.

Forty feet from the edge of the ferry slip near Fisherman's Wharf, a closed car slowed to a four mile speed. Its driver stepped from it to the deck of the dock. The slashing beam from the searchlight on Alcatraz Island stabbed through the night. For an instant its rays illumined the interior of the plunging car. They fell upon the livid face of Senator King.

Five seconds later the light flashed again on the

unquiet waters which had closed above the car and its occupant.

At the second hour of morning Ming Sun Tai entered the shrine room of his ancestral devotions. About the neck of Milo Fo gleamed the four pendant jewels. Ming Sun Tai picked up the one-stringed banjo. The silence was broken by the whine of a sharp note. In the dim candle light the little wrinkles about the eyes of Milo Fo quivered in the semblance of a smile.

"That is accomplished," whispered Ming Sun Tai. "Now into the Celestial Skies shall drift the incense of my devotion."

HOP

HOP

"The stars come nightly to the sky
The tidal waves unto the sea—

CHIN FAT was spawned in the stilted house of his father which verges the muck of a rice field beside the Canton River. The house stands away from the East Gate of the city beyond the festering graves that lay about the temple wherein wailing droves of starving old women sublet the business of singing prayers from hypocrite Buddhist priests.

He is dead now in San Francisco and on his hand a phosphorescent rotten yellow 'diamond' defeats the blackness of his grave, and in the sockets of his skull his clotted blood reveals the black technique of death.

This dog of a Chin Fat is dead in the 'dishonoured fastness of a rented grave at which no person mourns. Presently the charnel slugs will get him and for a little while in sanguinary carnival the crawling grubs of earth will discover a congenial savour in the fabric of his tissues. Then he will incorporate with the black earth slime of his origin and nights which were blemished by each enterprise of his inception will be clean. Stars whose rays impacted on the filth of his

soul when it knew residence in his body will then shine clear upon his tranquil house which once was hell. The beast is dead.

. . .

At dawn in Canton a creaking cart traversed the crooked streets which lay within the East Wall of the city. Before the sun was an hour high the cart was filled with a cargo of dead girl babies whose parents had contributed to their offspring the sleep that derives from a pill of uncooked opium.

The parents of Chin Fat were poor and opium for the purpose of murder was beyond their means, and so the three baby sisters who had preceded Chin Fat were strangled with the leather string which ordinarily functioned as the tether of a pig belonging to a Buddhist priest. While the leather string was absent from the pig's leg he would be herded in the hut wherein dwelt the father of Chin Fat who was nominally the watchman in charge of the priest's pig. In reality Chin Fat's father was a professional thief who spent most of his time stealing rice.

On the day which marked the strangling of the third consecutive girl baby the priest's pig took advantage of the absence of the leather thong and escaped. Enjoying his freedom he trotted to the Whampoa Channel of the Canton River. He bathed luxuriously in the mud for a few minutes and then, over his depth, he began to swim for the

rice field which lay across the channel. Presently blood dyed his wake and as he swam his throat was slashed with his plunging front feet. Midway of the channel he squealed loudly several times and died with a final crescendo grunt of protest and surprise. His squeals were echoed by the watchman and the watchman's wife whose neglect had permitted his escape. This wailing pair, sensing the disaster which had befallen them, returned to their domicile upon the clay floor of which lay the body of the baby daughter so lately strangled. About her neck was still the leather thong whose removal from the leg of the pig had been the instrument of that animal's escape.

As the watchman's fears grew upon him he found himself no longer able to control the impulse to flee from the wrath of the Buddhist priest who owned the pig. He departed from the East Gate of the city. He traversed the city and presently was lost in the labyrinth of streets near West Gate from which extends the Street of Benevolence and Love. Thereafter for many weeks he found sanctuary in the lost black houses about him.

The mother carried the form of her strangled daughter from the hut and with the leather thong still about the infant's neck she cast it into the sluggish channel where presently it came to rest upon the mud flat which is left bare when the tide is

out. For half a day four vultures from the Execution Ground forsook their wonted points of patrol, but presently the tide came in and so these interrupted scavengers flapped their slow reluctant wings West to their accustomed feasting.

A year later in all this happy circumstance Chin Fat was born in the hut from which had escaped his three baby sisters and the pig belonging to the Buddhist priest. His advent was marked by the Cycle of Running Deer. "He will be fleet of foot," his mother predicted. So that the evil spirits might be deceived she christened the child "Little Lady Pig." "The evil spirits will think he is a girl and will pay no attention to him."

When the Little Lady Pig was two weeks old he fell sick. From their burrows in the crumbling bricks of the clay bed which stood against the wall of the hut Chin Fat's mother captured four cold and sluggish beetles which with a wisp of hair, three feathers from a crow and half an ounce of parings from the hoof of a pig were boiled in a jar until but a spoonful of essence remained. This potent medicine was given to the infant Chin Fat and he was thrown naked upon the uneven floor of the hut where for three days and nights he wailed until the fact of his being alive established his triumph over the evil spirits which had attacked him.

When he was six years old he abandoned his milk

name and after a few lessons he learned the business of collecting firewood. He returned one evening from the territory about the graves which lay near the fort beyond the Buddhist temple. Dangling from a pole across his shoulders were two great bundles of fuel. His mother's gratification lasted only for a moment and then the smile on her face gave way to a grimace of horror. "You have destroyed the nest of the black birds!"

Chin Fat sensed his error. "These branches come from the nests of crows. There are more. We shall be warm." For the next week he was subjected to terrific beatings which taught him the virtue of falsehood and the advantages of deceit. "The nests of crows are molested only by people of evil character. You are a criminal," his mother reiterated. To defeat the efforts of the evil spirits she burned a pinch of sulphur and charcoal dust in the hair which bristled from the forehead of Chin Fat. With the flame of the burning powder there came a scar which endured throughout his life and with the scar a new name which would tend to confuse the Gods of Darkness.

The evil spirits were unsuccessful in their pursuit of Chin Fat and when he was twelve years old he put on the cap which marked the ending of his childhood. For this son who had become a man his mother found a wife and with the family of the girl

red papers of engagement were exchanged. It was fitting that the new husband should go to school and so to school he went while his wife served in the house of her mother-in-law. At school Chin Fat was a failure and one day he came home to his wife weeping loudly from the pain of a beating he had received at the hands of his teacher. Over the bruised areas of his skull his wife applied a mixture of black mud and pitch which presently formed an impregnable defence against such roving spirits as might seek to gain entrance into her husband's head. After school had proved to be a failure Chin Fat studied the business of rain making for a while but in his roving he fell in with a character whose heart was black and who wore the shoes of treachery. Chin Fat and his new companion earned several dollars between them one evening by beating an old man to death and taking several strings of cash from his girdle. A dispute arose concerning the division of the spoils and in this dispute Chin Fat was well beaten by his associate.

Bearing his dishonourable scars thick upon him he fled to the sanctuary of his mother's house whence after a period of days he journeyed forth to affiliate with a local society of crop guardians. Presently from his vantage point in the door of a leaf-clad hut in a garden of watermelons his roving eye discovered new opportunity for gain. A compromise

with a foraging party resulted in considerable profit to Chin Fat. To the foraging party he sold the crop of which he was guardian and returned to his home with nearly six dollars in silver. Two cents of this he gave to his wife and two cents to his mother. While he was lying under cover vague ideas of life in a world apart from his constricted horizon recurred to him. They were inspired by the tales which had been told him by his associate murderer.

He resolved to start a friendly loan society with ten associates. "For enterprise I need great capital," he said to several prospective partners. "Each of us shall contribute five dollars. I shall be the head man and will provide a great feast, and after a year the next man will pay in five dollars and receive ten times that amount." After a little while he found ten individuals who agreed to enter into this co-operative loan with him, and thus he promoted The Friendly Society of the Eleven Worthies.

Soon after, with a treasure of sixty dollars in his pocket, he fled across the city and embarked on a junk which lay at the mouth of the creek that flows through the gardens of the Honam Temple. At noon the junk cleared the Shameen Channel and swung southward toward Macao. It landed at evening against the fleet of its kind which fronts the crescent harbour of Macao. Chin Fat trotted swiftly across a field of sampans until he gained the

reaches of the Praia Grande. He traversed this street at dusk for half a mile along the waterfront; caring not whither his feet led him. Then the shadows deepened, striking from the silhouette of the San Paulo Cathedral against the sky and presently night lay over the city.

Chin Fat swung into a little street and while the bells of the several Christian churches announced the evening hour he dived into a gambling house whose flamboyant invitations were revealed by the rays of clustering red lanterns. In the course of the evening he lost half of his wealth but to offset this misfortune he made the acquaintance of a Chinaman whose Portuguese blood showed only in his name. This Conego Sampaio invested Chin Fat's mind with a method of beating the game of poverty. "Hongkong is forty miles away," he said. "Obtain employment on the steamer which runs daily from here to that city. Each day I will supply you with a dozen boxes of powder such as English ladies use on their faces. Deliver these boxes to an address in Hongkong and for this service I will pay you each day five dollars."

Chin Fat thought of the time during which he had worked a full year for that amount. His eyes narrowed. "Opium?" he asked.

The Portuguese-Chinaman looked straight at him. "Opium."

Chin Fat engaged in this lucrative venture for a period of twelve days and then for twice that long he languished in a jail across from Kowloon Point. "This is a good business," he reflected. "Conducted on a more elaborate scale it is worthy of a man's attention." When he was released from jail he returned to Macao but instead of resuming his traffic in opium he secured employment for himself in the great opium factory which is operated by white millionaires at the expense of the yellow pauper millions of the East.

For ten years Chin Fat stood before one of a hundred great brass cauldrons. During all this time he used his eyes.

One day he married a Chinese girl who was employed at a cauldron near the one over which he watched. On the day of his marriage Chin Fat spoke briefly to his second wife. "I smoke opium. Contrive to bring with you this night to our house two tins of the best black gum." The wife of Chin Fat accomplished her husband's command.

"You have stolen opium," he said in thanking her. "See that you bring two tins home with you each night. Otherwise I shall deliver you to the authorities."

In the course of six weeks Chin Fat had as much opium as he could easily conceal in the quilted garment upon which he was at work. In September he

embarked for Manila. He remained in Manila long enough to add a hundred words to his English vocabulary and then one day he sailed on an army transport bound for San Francisco. "All things like this can be arranged with the judicious use of money." Chin Fat appeared on the ship's papers as mess boy.

On a night in October the transport entered the Golden Gate. At midnight she docked at Fort Mason and before dawn Chin Fat and his heavy quilted vest were over the side. He lay for a while after midnight in the shadows of a billboard on Van Ness Avenue. At dawn he made his way along Francisco Street until he came to Columbus Avenue. On Stockton Street he swung to the right. Presently he dived into the heart of San Francisco's Chinatown.

He paused for a moment to warm himself at a flare which blazed in the gutter before a blank brick wall patched with a motif of red paper posters in Chinese. A motto written on two silk handkerchiefs pasted on the wall attracted his attention.

"Riches lead to vice and poverty to theft," he read. The two handkerchiefs were marriage announcements. "The two young fools think that happiness lies in the middle course," he reflected. He pressed his elbows down to reassuring contact with the tins

of opium that lay against his ribs. "I shall try riches. If vice follows, well and good."

An old Chinaman carrying a flickering candle cupped in his hand came shuffling out of the night. Chin Fat accosted this old man and asked him three sharp questions. A moment later Chin Fat walked into the obscurity of Bartlett Alley. Under the faint rays of a little green light he stepped softly down the rickety stairs which led from the sidewalk to the sub-surface entrance of the Goo Yat Lodging House. Confronting him was a door of heavy plank two feet wide. He knocked on this door. After a little while there was a sound from within and presently the door swung open. Chin Fat entered quickly and looked about him. Goo Yat who had opened the door proceeded with the business of fastening it. He fixed seven strap iron hasps in their places and across the breadth of the door set three iron bars. Seven padlocks snapped to their staples. Over the whole surface Goo Yat swung an iron grill which clanked in contact with appropriate eyebolts anchored in the brickwork about the frame of the door.

Goo Yat turned to the newcomer. "How did you get here?" Chin Fat explained the manner of his coming. "Ai," the old man remarked. "Did you bring opium?"

The eyes of Chin Fat narrowed quickly. "Two

tins of it," he answered. "I wish to sell it. What is it worth?"

"That can be arranged," the old man said. "Just now I will give you fifty dollars for a five tael tin." Chin Fat laughed a moment in derision. "It has been worth thrice that much for many years," he said. Negotiations ended with the sale of two five tael tins for which Chin Fat received three hundred dollars.

"I shall live here for a while," he said to the old man. "I shall live here until I can learn enough of the local language to enable me to shift for myself."

"That is well," Goo Yat replied. "Come with me." He led the way through a narrow passageway which ended in a bulkhead of undisturbed clay. The passageway was lined with doors set at intervals of ten feet. These doors opened upon criblike rooms whose ceilings were but six feet above the earth floor. At the end of the passageway Goo Yat reached his hand above his head and fumbled for an instant searching for something which lay on the ceiling of the low rooms. His hand came back clutching the end of a short rope ladder whose fastenings lay in the obscurity beyond the feeble rays of a coal oil lantern which hung against the end of the passage.

He climbed this ladder. "Follow me," he di-

rected. Chin Fat followed the old man. He took hold of his guide's coat and marched for a distance of twenty feet into the shadows to the right. Here in a room cut in the earth a solitary candle burned. Chin Fat saw about him various low benches arranged in regular order against the wall of earth. His guide turned to him. "This would be a good place to live," he said. "For twenty-five cents a week your residence can be maintained. For that rental one of these sleeping benches is yours and the box which stands at its head. Your associates ask no questions. Some of them are in disfavour with the authorities which govern this city."

Chin Fat noticed that three or four of the benches deep in the shadows were occupied. "It is well," he agreed. "For the present I shall live here. And the matter of food?" he asked.

"Come with me," Goo Yat directed. The pair retraced their steps and at the opposite end of the gallery they dived into another dark cavern. In one corner stood a low iron stove. Near it was a box half filled with chicken feathers. A rusty water pipe terminated in a faucet dull with verdigris. The incessant drip of leaking water from this faucet kept the floor of the room perpetually damp. Two cooking pots hung on heavy wire spikes driven into the clay wall. A little bundle of fragments broken from the thin panels of a packing box lay beside the

stove. On this firewood lay a rusty hatchet. Against the wall of the room hung a cup of oil from which extended a wick whose weak flame thinned in its hunger for oxygen.

"The light burns day and night," Goo Yat explained. "Within this iron stove a cooking fire is made when you desire to eat. I can purchase rice for you or chicken if you choose to afford it, and here you can prepare your meals. For the use of this kitchen I shall charge you twenty-five cents a week."

"How many other people use it?" Chin Fat asked.

"Seventeen breakfasts were cooked this morning," the old man replied.

"That is a lucky number," Chin Fat commented. "I shall cook here. And now if you will lend me a pipe I shall retreat from fatigue behind the mask of smoke which comes when a pill of good black gum is burned."

"I forbid your smoking here," the old man ordered. "No one smokes here. There are proper places for that indulgence. This is not one of them."

Chin Fat laughed in irony. "Of liars thou art the greatest. Opium has been smoked in here within the last hour. The police can be interested. Do you permit smoking?" He smiled in evil emphasis of his question.

The old man returned the smile but a note of fear was in his reply. "It is permitted," he said.

Chin Fat spoke sharply. "That is well." He gave the old man some silver money. "Buy me a piece of pork for roasting and a dried duck and tea and rice." He thought of the treasure of opium carried in the quilted vest which girdled his ribs. "Each day provide rich food for me so long as I remain here. Each day speak English words to me that I may learn the language of the streets. Be gone!"

In the course of the ensuing ten weeks Chin Fat accomplished three things. He equipped himself with a wardrobe appropriate to the city in which he lived. He sold two more tins of opium to Goo Yat, discovering with this second transaction that the old man kept his money in a leather belt about his waist. Last of all he added more than a hundred words of English to his vocabulary.

Under the clothes which Goo Yat purchased for him from a tailor in Chinatown, Chin Fat still wore the quilted vest in whose fabric was carried thirty tins of opium. On the night of the twenty-sixth year of Kwang-Su, being Cap-Sun or the thirty-sixth year of the cycle, Chin Fat made his second journey into the San Francisco night. "It is the eighteenth day of the Third Moon," he said to Goo Yat. "The day of the God of the Central Mountain, of the

Three Brothers and of the goddess Tu Hen who is worshipped behind graves. I am twenty-four years old this day. I shall journey to the temple and there make my devotions before the Gods of the Sombre Altar."

Goo Yat unlocked the several fastenings of the door of his establishment and removed the bars and the iron grill which lay between his narrow domain and the world outside. "And you return?"

"Before the night is done I shall return," Chin Fat replied. He mounted the stairs which led to the street level. "Damn this business of the gods," Chin Fat mocked when he had reached the street. "I am twenty-four years old and a man. In my pocket is money and about my body is a fortune in opium."

Before the night was done Chin Fat had sold all of his smuggled opium. He returned to the house of Goo Yat before dawn with more than four thousand dollars in banknotes in his belt and with ambitious plans of sinister unworthiness within his heart. Within three months he had set up an establishment of his own in which his countrymen might indulge their passion for fan-tan or where if their fancy dictated they could mark a ticket for a Night Time lottery. "Chin Fat," these tickets read. "Ten Thousand Dollar Night Time."

After his gambling establishment had been in

operation for a month the police discovered him. He found that he could not purchase official permission to operate, and so ostensibly he closed up the gambling business. In reality his business interests were transferred to the city across San Francisco Bay from whence issued the lottery tickets. His store in Chinatown blossomed out in a fine camouflage of merchandise,—red paper and brushes, bird cages, chopsticks and preserved ginger, tea, incense, back scratchers and all of the impedimenta of Chinese commerce on which feed the curious appetites of tourists.

The lottery ran for a year against the laws of the State but in obedience to the law of probability. It brought substantial sums to its proprietor until the regularity of his income became monotonous. Then Chin Fat took a chance. It came to be common practice for him to sell two or three times as many tickets each night as he could pay out of his capital in case luck should run against him. On a night of adversity each of four gentlemen playing five dollar tickets won more than six thousand dollars. To gain time Chin Fat explained weakly that his reserve capital was across the bay in San Francisco. He attempted to avoid the four winners long enough to make his exit but they insisted upon accompanying him until their prizes should be paid. The party crossed in silence to San Francisco and at

the entrance to the cellar wherein dwelt Goo Yat, Chin Fat bade his companions wait for a few moments. Goo Yat admitted him. Chin Fat led the way into the underground cooking room. The rusty hatchet lay in its accustomed place upon the broken wood beside the stove.

Chin Fat made one savage swing at the old Chinaman with this hatchet and succeeded in cutting his head practically in two. In the girdle about Goo Yat's waist lay a treasure in banknotes. Five minutes later Chin Fat had paid the financial obligations with which the evil spirits had cursed his lottery. Before dawn he hunted out a plainclothes member of the Chinatown squad. "On my return to my dwelling place I discovered the door open," he said. "Goo Yat has been murdered."

He abandoned the lottery business on the following day and for a month was idle. During his leisure he elected to drift without thought of the future but the cumulative effect of the black years of his life compelled attention. From the complex data of his experience there evolved the uncertainty of life on earth. For the first time he thought of death and what death would mean to him. In him there awakened an insistent instinct which demanded sons of his blood. "Sons must be born so that beside my grave there shall be reverent worshippers whose devotions will insure peace after death," he

reflected. "Peace after death and freedom from the evil spirits which prey upon the souls of men adrift in the black sea that lies between the Island of Life and the shores of the Seventh Heaven."

He gave no thought to the two wives whom he had abandoned in China but began diligently to seek for a third wife who would bring him sons to worship at their father's grave. His search endured until one day he encountered a Chinese girl, Toy Sing, whose appearance pleased him. He followed this girl until she entered the door of the telephone exchange in Chinatown.

His eyes lifted to the balcony of a house which lay against Portsmouth Square. They roved along a row of potted plants that hedged the rail of this balcony. They rested on a cluster of lilies which sprung from a bowl whose blue was that of the reflected skies. "Almond blossoms at Springtime," he whispered. "Jade in which breathes life." His glance fell to the gutter which fronted the fish vendor's store. It fixed upon the discarded head of a fish from which extended a symmetrical structure of delicate bones whose bare surfaces seemed to suggest the transient quality of life. "Ai, death never hurries. Death never sleeps. . . . Jet hair and the elegance of a white pigeon. This enchanting female animal shall be my wife and bear me sons."

He walked across Washington Street and entered the door of the telephone exchange. Save for a man at a desk under the opal skylight the room was empty and the gold dragons against the red wall seemed to mock at his pursuit. Then from behind a black partition whose glass panels were obscured by yellow curtains he heard a voice which came to him soft as the liquid moonlight of an Eastern night. He walked to a door which was framed in the partition that defeats the curiosity of casual visitors. Without ceremony he opened this door and the object of his search was before him. For a moment he looked directly at Toy Sing. "Little brilliant butterfly," he said in Chinese, "I shall marry you."

Toy Sing turned until she faced him. "I do not understand much Chinese," she said. "Do you speak English?"

"Can do. Long Time ketch lily bit. I say you marry me. Plenty boys come. Hai!"

Toy Sing looked at him. "Beat it!" she said in perfect English.

Chin Fat obeyed her command but on the steps of the telephone exchange he paused for a moment in reflection. His reverie culminated in determination. "I shall marry this girl," he said to himself. He was twenty-six years old at the time. It took him four years to accomplish his purpose of making Toy Sing his bride.

Toy Sing at sixteen was the most beautiful woman in Chinatown. Her origin was veiled in the fog of a San Francisco night whose dawn revealed an infant cradled in a ten cent basket abandoned in the gutter of Barlett Alley. A happy destiny had brought this foundling to the attention of a San Francisco woman who gave Toy Sing all that maternal love and wealth can mean.

With the years there had come to Toy Sing a great ambition to pay her debt to the world through service in the interests of her countrymen. With the approval of her foster-mother she established her house in the centre of the complex life of Chinatown. She studied at first hand the mechanism of the social machine about her until presently Chinatown began to realize that here was a girl of its own race whose work in many instances was crowned with success after all the gods between Heaven and Earth had suffered defeat.

For a while, beside Toy Sing there lived in her house but one other person, her aged Chinese servant, but within a year occasional moments of loneliness and an awakening instinct which demanded a constant objective for her affections prompted Toy Sing to adopt as her sister another derelict fragment of humanity. Thus it was that Kee Song, a twelve year old Chinese girl, came to be known as the sister of Toy Sing.

Throughout the year following their meeting Toy Sing avoided the attentions of Chin Fat with a defensive armour of sincere indifference. At the end of his unsuccessful year Chin Fat adopted a new technique. He went to one of the Christian churches in Chinatown and in a long confession to the priest he told the man of the church that marriage with Toy Sing was the great ambition of his life.

"It is true," he said in substance, "that I have done wrong and that my life has been marked by enterprises which would not bear the light of day. I do not understand why my gambling establishments are considered unrighteous, but they shall be abandoned without question. My one desire is to win this girl for my own, and if it is necessary that I effect my own spiritual regeneration, that too shall be accomplished under your guidance."

The priest sought to dissuade Chin Fat from his course, but no argument could overthrow the flame of desire which burned in the Chinaman's breast. Presently word came to Toy Sing that Chin Fat had abandoned his questionable business interests and that his action had been inspired by his ambition to win her hand in marriage. For the first time since she had met him, she gave him audience and he realized when he left her that her voice had not been

accentuated by the tones of absolute finality. He met her again at a formal dinner given to a Chinese statesman and on this night he began to speak of his love in words derived from a spurious and selfish lexicon. "I have sinned," he said, "and know that I am unworthy to live in the same world with you. I have sinned—but I have repented and I love you. The days of my life are marked with an endeavour to live as you would have me. The heart within me that was black has burned to ashes of snow in the flame of the passion which you inspire."

Toy Sing again rejected the attentions of this persistent lover. With the passage of the months the foster-mother of Toy Sing one day announced her daughter's engagement to an American gentleman. Chin Fat read the English words carefully three times and journeyed to Toy Sing's residence. She admitted him to her library where at the moment there was gathered a class of a dozen Chinese children busy with the intricate syllables of that passage from Mother Goose in which Old Mother Hubbard explores her icebox for dogmeat.

The hypocrite eyes of Chin Fat smiled in benevolent approval of the scene. "Each of the hours of thy life is marked with beauty," he said to Toy Sing. "Do you wonder then that my nights are filled with dreams of you? . . . I read of your en-

gagement in marriage with the American president of the bank. Is it the truth?"

- Toy Sing answered him. "It is the truth. We are engaged to be married."

Chin Fat left Toy Sing a little later and his love for her found expression in the hired murder of her francé. The verdict of the coroner in the case was that the American had been accidentally killed by an automobile, but only Chin Fat and the driver of the death car knew of the price which had been paid to insure the successful accomplishment of the accidental murder.

Chin Fat spoke again with the priest of the Christian church. "In the death of the man who was to be her mate perhaps the gods suggest that Toy Sing marry a member of her own race."

With cunning and infinite tact Chin Fat renewed his suit. He veiled its furious intensity in the frank enthusiasm of his adopted city but in every detail of his campaign there was incorporated all the wisdom which had distilled from Oriental centuries. Within another year Toy Sing smothered the accents of an instinct which had turned her away from Chin Fat and on a day of surrender she promised Chin Fat that she would marry him. Thus it was that in June the streets of Chinatown were filled with people above whose heads streamed long red banners. Under these marriage signals a great throng

waited before the steps of the church. Presently down these steps walked Toy Sing and her husband.

"Until a house is built worthy of being our residence," Chin Fat said to her that night, "we shall spend our time in travel. You have seen all the great cities of this continent and it is my wish to see them with you beside me."

For a month before his departure Chin Fat was busy with the architect to whom he had entrusted the construction of his house. One night he talked to his architect for an hour and ordered some additional work in the sub-structure of the new residence. "For this work," he advised, "it is desirable that you use blind artisans from the Leong Sing Tong. When their work is completed see that they are sent out of the city. . . . One door at the end of the tunnel opening to street level, mind you, and another door which shall be one of the panels of my library, opening into that room of my house."

He gave additional orders to one more of his professional associates. "Renew operations with my four lotteries," he directed. "Open up the fan-tan games. I have placed one hundred thousand dollars to your credit in the Anglo Bank. I shall be back within six months and at that time you shall render me an accounting."

Before Toy Sing started on her journey with her husband she too gave various instructions to her

several agents relative to her many charities. Scattered around through Chinatown were the habitations of more than twenty old men and women who looked to Toy Sing for their food. Her sister Kee Song knew of these dependent old people and to this young girl Toy Sing entrusted the business of supplying food to them. For Kee Song herself the older sister invoked the occasional attentions of her foster-mother and of the priest of the Christian church.

The departure of Chin Fat and Toy Sing marked the commencement of the construction of their residence and soon a swarm of artisans encumbered the property. Each day to the work there came twenty men who were engaged in burrowing a complicated sub-structure below the basement of the house. Unseen by the workmen above a system of galleries and partitions was built deep below the foundation walls. From these depths one long flight of stairs led to a panel in the wall of the room which was to be the library of the house. A tunnelled exit from the sub-basement ran to a building on another street. This tunnel was blocked by a door which opened upon a room adjoining an apothecary shop which Chin Fat had purchased and which was conducted by a disreputable basket weaver who knew as little of the purpose of the sea horses and horned toads and

beetles in their jars about his shop as he did of King Solomon's Mines.

The sub-surface establishment was divided into three groups of rooms. Six elaborate apartments occupied half of the area. Thirty stalls six feet long and less than five feet wide were set apart by partitions which ran to a concrete ceiling. The third group was nothing more than an area of double bunks separated by thin board partitions rising to a height of four feet from the clay floor. The lower bunks made of thin rough boards were within a foot of the floor. The upper ones were perhaps three feet above them. In the centre of this group of sleeping places was an open area from which ran the flight of stairs which led to Chin Fat's library.

"If the supply of opium holds out," Chin Fat had estimated, "the establishment can easily accommodate one hundred visitors each night. It should easily bring me five thousand solid silver dollars each month."

On the strength of his anticipated income and secure in the knowledge of a very substantial existing bank balance, Chin Fat indulged himself in a honeymoon which lasted nearly a year. One by one he visited a dozen large cities of the United States, establishing in each of them some questionable busi-

ness connections which should further his sinister interests after his return to San Francisco.

One day Toy Sing, weary of travel spoke to him. "It is desirable that I return to our home," she said.

Chin Fat protested.

"It is desirable that I return to our home," she repeated. "You can continue your journey but I, she hesitated—"our child will be born." The impending event altered the Chinaman's attitude and he immediately made arrangements for returning to his house. Toy Sing telegraphed her foster-mother who in turn disclosed to Toy Sing's sister the reason for the returning.

The delight of Kee Song found expression at an altar before which she voiced her prayers of thankfulness and exultation. "My sister Toy Sing is returning," she said to one of the priests of the church, "and after a little while there will be a baby."

"That is as it should be," the priest said. "Take this to the new residence and in your daily prayers remember the welfare of the mother and the child." He gave Kee Song a heavy bronze crucifix which she carried to the completed house. Thereafter day by day before this crucifix she voiced the happiness within her heart.

"Everything will be all right," she said to her sister when Toy Sing arrived. "Each day I have talked of you with Mister God."

Toy Sing walked to her sister's room where she knelt for a moment with her eyes upon the bronze crucifix hanging against the wall. She smiled at Kee Song. "Everything will be all right." In her sister's smile Kee Song read that their honeymoon year had not been one of happiness.

"Everything will be all right, pretty Toy Sing," she answered. "Mister God will make it so."

Meanwhile Chin Fat was happy in the belief that at last his welfare beyond the close confines of earth would be watched over by many sons of his blood. "The first is about to be born!" He spoke his exultation to his associates. "I shall have ten sons to worship at my grave! That is the sole ambition of my life,—the only reason for living."

"I am going away for a little while," he said to his wife, "but I shall return before our son is born. I am going to a city in the South where I shall arrange to have another house built for us,—a sun-light house in the orange groves." He bade his wife farewell but instead of pursuing the program which he had outlined he dived into the business of straightening out the involved affairs of his lotteries and fan-tan houses across the Bay. His agents reported that his lotteries which had operated in Oakland during his absence had paid no profits and in this he sensed the activities of some hand as unclean as his own.

On the seventh day of his stay in Oakland rumour reached him that a child had been born in his house. He telephoned to confirm this information. "Two days after you left your child was born," a voice said to him from the telephone. He drove in great haste to the ferry and in a little while he was at the entrance of his house in San Francisco. Inside the door he was met by an old woman who bowed to him. "Blessings upon thy house!" she said. "Thy child was born six days ago."

Chin Fat walked rapidly to the room where rested his wife and their child. Wrapped in her quilted silken robes Toy Sing sat in the sunlight. Beside her in a little bed of painted ivory lay the child. Chin Fat gave his wife a single word of greeting. "My son," he demanded. "Let me look upon this elder son who shall worship at my grave."

With the fatigue of her experience heavy upon her Toy Sing stood beside the sleeping child. Something of hesitation marked her movements as she drew the silken coverlet from its place. "I am sorry, Papa Chin Fat," she said, "the gods have not given us a son. Look upon the face of—your daughter!"

Chin Fat stopped still. His face convulsed with the dark blood of his anger. His eyes narrowed and about the tense muscles of his jaw there surged the contours of his rage. His livid lips thinned in a

smile of insane fury. The tense fingers of his open hand swung at the baby's throat. They closed on Toy Sing's intervening wrists. As easily as if the substance of her body had been one with the white fabric of her robe he dragged Toy Sing into the room which he had called his library. One little cry as if from a wounded, fluttering bird escaped her lips. Chin Fat opened the panel in the wall and flung her down the long stairway into the dark deserted opium rooms below. As fast as his clattering heels could carry him Chin Fat pursued.

From a shelf against the partition of one of the rough bunks he seized a bamboo opium pipe. Toy Sing, prone on the earthen floor struggled to rise to her feet. Chin Fat struck wildly at her head and then upon her writhing shoulders he rained a shower of blows which left the bamboo splintered in his hand. Savagely he cast it from him. "There, damn you!" he raged at the senseless huddled form upon the floor. "That is your reward for bearing daughters instead of sons."

A spume of froth on his chattering lips signalled his tortured breaking nerves. He seized another opium pipe which lay upon its shelf. With trembling hands he lighted the wick of a cooking lamp and a moment later the white fumes of burning opium dissolved in the heavy air. He threw him-

self down into a bunk which stood a foot from the floor. From where he lay his venomous eyes fixed upon the little broken body of his wife.

Sleep came heavy upon him. His head fell back against the thin partition which lay between him and the girl upon the floor. The livid scar which his mother had burned on his forehead cooled to the hue of a knot in the board against which lay his head.

Down the long stairway to this scene pattered the exploring feet of little Kee Song. She hesitated for a moment in the half light of the place and then knelt quickly beside her sister. She raised the girl's head until it rested against her own. She whispered little words of horror and of pitying love. She saw the torn silk about the shoulders of Toy Sing. Her fingertips traced the blue scarred welts which lined the tender flesh. She pillowed Toy Sing's listless head upon a scarf which she drew from her own shoulders. She raced up the stairway and returned in a moment carrying the heavy bronze crucifix which the priest of the Christian church had given her. "Open your eyes, darling Toy Sing," she breathed. She set the crucifix against the wood partition near Toy Sing's head. "Awaken and look upon Mister God."

Toy Sing's eyelids quivered. From her lips came a whisper of agony.

"Look, my sister,—open your eyes. Mister God will fix everything. See, I will hang Him here where you can look at Him. In a moment I will return with the doctor man of medicine."

Kee Song walked across the earthen floor of the open space and from beside a bulkhead wall she returned with a rusty six inch spike. "See, I am hanging Mister God against the wall. You have but to look upon Him and He will make you well!" She used the heavy crucifix for a hammer and a little away from a knot in the partition she drove the spike. Under the blows of the crucifix it punched through the soft wood. Then the impact of a single final blow buried the spike for nearly its full length.

Kee Song hung the crucifix on the spike. "There, pretty darling," she whispered to Toy Sing, "raise your eyes. Look upon Mister God. Presently I will be back."

Toy Sing's eyelids lifted slowly. Her half senseless gaze rested upon the crucifix. Then her vision centered upon a drop of blood which formed on the head of the spike. A second drop merged with the first. A third drop fell upon the crucifix. Thereafter for a space of minutes dark blood dripped downward from its unseen source.

Kee Song returned presently with a surgeon. "Your sister is not seriously injured," he reported

to the frightened girl. "She will live." He turned his attention to the inert form lying in the rough bunk beyond the thin partition. He recognized Chin Fat. Under the surgeon's quick hands the grisly hulk of Chin Fat shook like jelly. "Hop sleep," the surgeon said.

The body of Chin Fat shook like jelly but his head was fixed and still. . . . In an hour a marching line of exploring ants fought at their black coagulated feast.

JUNK

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I

WHEN Hong Chung Lu, the red-headed one, was eight years old some evil spirit invaded the circle of benevolent influence cast by the porcelain cat-fish on the ridges of his father's house.

Soon after this calamity a plague of the flesh ate its malignant course beneath the poultices of fish bones and beetles upon the skin of Chung Lu's brother and in less than a month the brother's soul ascended to the skies on the Dragon. A rice-eating neighbour gorged himself on the funeral feast and discovered the source of evil which had visited the house of Chung Lu's father.

"In the red hair of Chung Lu the spirits of hell enjoy sanctuary. So long as Chung Lu dwells beneath this roof the porcelain catfish is powerless and your house is cursed."

"That is the truth," Chung Lu's father agreed. He selected a pliant rope from the packing lines outside the door of his house and presently the little boy had been scourged beyond the borders of the paternal domain.

"Begone! Away, thou red-headed residence of

evil. Take with thee the curses of my house!"

Chung Lu did not quite understand the incident. He knew that the burning welts across his narrow shoulders hurt with a fury which made him forget the hunger in his belly and the cold that pierced the rags about him.

Under the lash of his father's hands he did not cry aloud but the white line of his lips spoke the reaction accomplished within his tortured flesh. For three days he lay in the grasses on the South bank of the Min River near the village of Yen Ping Fu. The mud of the river marsh felt grateful upon his skin but after a while the hurt of his wounds became inferior to the hunger pain within him. When these demands could no longer be soothed with the tightening of his ragged girdle he clawed among the grasses about him and ate great quantities of roots until his gorged stomach rebelled.

On the fourth day the sunlight warmed him. "If my head were turned to the East," he thought, "this would be a good place in which to die. 'I am not cold nor hungry and the pain of my wounds is gone.' Ambition died. His eyes closed slowly and his little body settled more intimately into the friendly cradle of the mud about him.

A rice bird a little way from him repeated three insistent notes. Chung Lu's farewell to life was interrupted by the bird's shrill call. He opened his

eyes and a moment later from his pursed lips came an attempted answer to the bird notes. "Rice bird, thou hast food in the slugs of earth. Thy coat of feathers keeps thee warm and all the interesting world lies beneath thy wings. Is that not enough? Why do you call me back to the miserable business of life?"

Then it seemed to this poor bit of living clay that the rice bird spoke to him: "Art thou not a man-child?" the rice bird shrilled. "Red-crested one, take courage. Awake and employ the energy of thy body in effort worthy of a man."

Chung Lu answered with a shrill note from his lips in which there rang new courage. He raised his little head. His eyes roved the space which lay between him and the river's edge. Then quickly he lowered his head but to no avail because the giant turtle, Ch'en, upon whose round unstable back is carried the whirling world, had discovered him.

* The turtle roared. "Coward! Did the fibres of thy father's lash reach thy spirit? Up! Art thou a man or does a woman's heart beat within thy breast? Does a stone lion fear the rain? Stand on thy feet. Day follows night. After a typhoon there are pears to gather."

Chung Lu answered the giant turtle. "Truth is upon thy lips and in my heart there is new courage. But for yet a little while I would sleep."

The turtle, Ch'en, answered him more softly. "Sleep then but remember that time is like an arrow. Time is the measure of life. When you awaken remember that a big chicken does not eat small rice. A man must beat his own drum. When you awaken go up the hill that you may read the world below you. Presently you will explore Foochow, the Happy Region of Earth. Remember that the fangs of the earth dogs cannot pierce the soul. You are a man and a man in himself is a small heaven. Sleep!"

Chung Lu fell quietly asleep. He slept throughout the flight of the warm sun from east to west. At evening he awakened. Of his conversation with Ch'en, the giant turtle, there remained in his memory naught save the one sentence: "Go up the hill."

"Tomorrow," he resolved, "I shall go to the top of the high hills."

At dawn the pain of hunger was again exquisite within him. He rose unsteadily to his feet. He sensed a lake of salt in the labyrinth of his throat. He walked toward the river's edge. Where Ch'en, the giant turtle, had rested no trace remained except the imprint of his armour, but a little beyond this depression in the earth Chung Lu was startled to discover a smaller turtle, measuring perhaps six inches across his plated shell.

"The friendly Ch'en has left me this reassuring

relative." He approached the turtle and picked it up. "While thou art with me, baby Ch'en, I shall remember that I am a man." He folded the turtle in the rags above his girdle. As he lay prone beside the river's edge to drink he felt against his ribs the encouraging pressure of this tangible souvenir of Ch'en's visit. He drank deep and immediately the acute pains of his hunger left him. In a field a little beyond the river's edge he found a few stalks of wild millet. Between his palms he threshed an ounce of grain. He munched this strengthening grain and was refreshed.

He began his journey toward the summit of the high hills. By nightfall he had covered a distance of a mile, but the high hills still seemed to lie a day's journey before him.

He saw a man enter a house which stood beside a grave about whose sheltering tiles rose a ring of pine trees.

Chung Lu explored his girdle. "Perhaps this man will give me food. Hola!" he said in greeting. "I have hunger. Here is an iron nail which I will give you for a little cooked rice. Hola!"

The man looked at him. "Evil Red-headed One, begone!" he said.

Chung Lu turned to retreat from this new enemy when suddenly he remembered the advice of the giant Ch'en. "A man must beat his own drum."

Chung Lu turned upon the man and in his shrill tones burned a venom which commanded respect. "Evil upon thee! In my girdle I carry the little brother of the giant Ch'en upon whose broad back rests this whirling world. Give me rice. Ch'en is my friend." He held the little turtle in his hand. He extended it threateningly toward the man.

"Hai! Give me that baby Ch'en." Forcibly the man took the little turtle away from Chung Lu and a moment later under the quick swing of a knife the turtle's armour was broken and its flesh was in the cooking pot.

From Chung Lu's lips there flooded a string of invectives which presently received from the farmer and his wife appropriate attention. "Surely the evil spirits will hear him!" the woman said. "It is better that we give him a little food."

The farmer placed a little rice in a dish. He fished a bit of the turtle meat from the cooking pot and placed this morsel of meat on the rice. "Eat, Red-Headed One," he said. "Eat, and then be gone!"

Chung Lu's teeth clamped down upon the bit of turtle flesh and then his ravenous jaws champ as fast as they could drive upon the food whose juice caressed his palate.

Throughout his life the acute ecstasy which came with this first bit of turtle flesh remained the most

exquisite sensation he had known. His eyes closed in his effort to prolong the realization of the physical relief which had dulled the teeth of his hunger. Then followed the substantial blessing of rice.

"Ha! Never was food so wonderful!"

The farmer turned to him. "Begone! And take thy red-head with thee before I snip it from thy body."

Chung Lu walked into the night. Above him the cold heavens were bright with stars. "Ai! That was worth while. I owe my life to Ch'en. Now I shall sleep." He collected an armful of withered rushes from where they grew in the soggy ground that fringed a hillside spring. These he carried to an open space beside a ring of little pines that encircled an ancient grave. He took care to make his bed outside the space enclosed by the pines. He lay down to sleep but for a little while his eyes traversed the brilliant constellations that burned in the sky above him. Some instinct within him appreciated the beauty of the veil of pine branches which lay between him and the sky.

Presently, in the twilight country of his dreams there came to him the giant Ch'en. "Go to the high hills," Ch'en commanded. "From the heights look upon the world. Afterwards your feet will lead you to the Happy Region of Foochow."

The next morning after Chung Lu had resumed

his journey he encountered a beggar coming toward him. "Red-headed boy, where are you going?" the beggar asked him.

"Into the high hills to look upon the world," Chung Lu replied.

"In the high hills dwell the Feng Shui," the lonesome beggar warned.

"I am not afraid of evil spirits, because Ch'en is my friend." He walked past the beggar and was about to depart on his way when the lonely beggar again hailed him.

"Stay! The high hills are cold. Only fur-bearing beasts and dog-worshippers live thereon. Many years ago the Emperor of the West proclaimed that he would give his daughter in marriage to a general who could defeat the armies of the Emperor of the East. His dog looked up at him. 'Can you defeat the armies of the Emperor of the East?' The dog said that he could and so he departed. He made friends with the Emperor of the East for a while, and then one day he bit off the emperor's head and came carrying it back to the Emperor of the West.

"I cannot give you my daughter in marriage although you have succeeded," the Emperor of the West told his dog.

"Hang me in the sun for a period of four or forty days, and I shall change to a man," said

dog. "Put me in a basket and over me place a weight and a cloth of silk."

"The Emperor of the West did this but his daughter could not restrain her curiosity and so before the time was up she lifted the silken cover on the basket and removed the weight and sure enough the dog had changed to a man, all except his head.

" 'The charm is broken,' the dog said. 'Now I must live in the body of a man and carry the head of a dog.' And so the Emperor's daughter covered the dog's head on this man with a cloth and they were married, and the people of the hills have forever worn cloths about their heads and have worshipped dogs. Avoid them. They worship dogs and eat men. They did not eat me because I am too old, but they would eat you the day after they found you."

"I am glad you told me this," Chung Lu said to the beggar. He retraced his steps and spent some days in the beggar's company. They came finally on the lower reaches of the Min River. Across on the North bank lay Foochow.

"Foochow, The Happy Region," the beggar said. "Enter the city and you will discover wealth and happiness. I will leave you now because if the police of the city should find me they would put me in prison."

Chung Lu wedged himself into a chattering mob which presently boarded a ferry that landed on Pagoda Island. He looked at the strange sights about him and wandered aimlessly during the day. After a while his feet led him to the Bridge of a Myriad Ages which spans the North Channel of the Min River in its jump to the Happy Region of Foochow. Lost in a herd of goats and donkeys and people which flowed across the Bridge, Hong Chung Lu presently came into the city. He stood for a little while at an end of the Bridge, looking about him.

"I am hungry," he reflected, "but that does not matter. Here before me is the world."

His reverie was interrupted by the sting of a rawhide lash wielded by a man who was escorting three fat pigs to slaughter. "Out of the way, Red-Headed Child of Evil."

Chung Lu leaped wildly over the parapet of the bridge and landed in the muddy dooryard of a hut ten feet below him. He lay for a little while where he had fallen and then slowly he got to his feet. He was conscious of the fixed gaze of a red-headed Chinaman. The man was standing in the door of his hut. "Orange Top," he said, "welcome to the house of Sing Fu."

"They did not kill you?"

Sing Fu looked at the boy. "They?"

"The Giant Ch'en told me to live with the people of the hills. A beggar who befriended me told me that the people of the hills would eat me and that the people of the plains would kill me when I was twelve years old. He said that all red-headed boys were killed when they were twelve years old. How is it that you being red-headed have lived?"

Sing Fu smiled. "You with your red head! You will be my son. Enter into the house of thy father. Little boy, hast thou hunger?"

"Food would be welcome," Chung Lu admitted. A moment later Sing Fu placed a bowl of rice before the boy. It was the biggest bowl of rice which Chung Lu had ever seen.

"Eat this," Sing Fu said. "I will be back presently."

The boy worked industriously on the rice for fifteen minutes at which time Sing Fu returned. In the man's hands were two strips of red paper and a dozen packs of firecrackers. Presently the last trace of evil spirits was exploded from the interior of the house and a strip of red paper was fixed on both sides of the house.

"There, that is a fitting welcome for thee," Sing Fu said to the boy. "What is thy name?"

"My names are Chung Lu. I am of the family of Hong."

"You are Hong Chung Lu," the man repeated. "That is a good and honourable name."

The boy stood for a while in silence beside a chair in a corner of the room. "The man is rich," he reflected. "He can afford a chair." For a little while his contentment found expression in meditation but before many minutes had passed his rising spirits prompted him to whistle a blithe song which the rice birds had taught him.

Sing Fu, who was working with some interesting bits of metal on the table in another corner of the room, turned to him. "That is good music." The man reached above his head and from a shelf against the wall he lifted a bamboo flute. "Listen to the song of the chu sue." He finished with the flute. The boy's eyes were wide with pleasure. Sing Fu gave the instrument to the boy.

Presently to their mutual astonishment, the boy played half of the air which he had heard.

"You have talent," Sing Fu said. "You can become a master of music."

In ten days the boy had become expert on the flute which his foster-father gave to him. In a little while Sing Fu brought to their house a long-necked, three-stringed banjo. Within a month Chung Lu had mastered this instrument. He

followed his education with practice on the mandolin and on a two-stringed fiddle. In a year the people of the settlement about the house of Sing Fu knew that the red-headed boy who dwelt therein was a musician.

"With the san shen and the viol, the yue chin and the chu sue he is equally skilled. His music is not harsh. It does not shriek nor does it offend even a man with the earache. It is the voice of rice birds at dawn, the cooing of doves; the melody of falling almond blossoms; the whisper of flowing water; the voice of a woman, and of a man breathing the accents of his love."

Stories of the skill of Hong Chung Lu spread rapidly and soon the house of his foster-father was thronged each night with visitors. Many of these visitors brought with them some little gift in payment for the music. Within a year Hong Chung Lu had collected a roomful of miscellaneous junk, most of which was valueless.

"It is a warm day. The sun shines," Sing Fu said to the boy on Hong Chung Lu's tenth birthday. "This day I shall not work. Come with me. We shall journey to the East Gate where the hot springs are. There we shall bathe. Perhaps my rusty limbs will bend with greater ease. Age is upon me."

The pair started on their journey. In a stone of one of the masonry piers of The Bridge of a Myriad

Ages, the boy Hong Chung Lu noticed the imprint of a human foot. He questioned his companion.

"The rock stood on a hillcrest behind Needle Peak where the river meets the sea. For many years a Mandarin of the East guarded the entrance of the river. He stood in one place so long that the print of his feet grew into the living rock. Then came the year when mountain bandits overran the province. Plum trees produced peaches. A dragon from the Eastern Sea burrowed under the city. Fire fell from the heavens and white clouds of air ascended. The Mandarin was burned by the fire of heaven but the prints of his feet remained to protect the river until two sacrilegious quarrymen cut away the rock. When they reached the Mandarin's footprints blood followed the strokes of their chisels but they persisted and presently they cut away the piece of rock which bore the imprint of one of the mandarin's feet. They began to carry it up the river to build this bridge. They fixed it in place in the bridge but just as they had finished it jumped out and kicked them into the river and then jumped back to its place again."

"And the other footprint is still on the rock at the river entrance?" the boy questioned.

"No. Over it a woman erected a tower to welcome her husband from a voyage but when he saw the strange mark he did not recognize the river

entrance and so he sailed away and never came back."

"Some day I should like to see that tower that the woman built."

"You cannot see it because nine evil men from across the sea hid in that tower and when they were caught they made nine pills of rice which they fed to nine carp that they had in the tower. The carp grew so big that finally the men sailed away across the sea on them and before they sailed they had to destroy the tower in order to get the carp out of it."

"I should like to have seen one of those carp eat his nourishing rice pill. I should like to eat some nourishing rice myself." The pair halted at a roadside kitchen and ate heartily of rice.

"I shall tell thee no more appetite stories," Sing Fu commented after the boy had eaten his fourth bowlful of rice. "Let us continue our journey."

Presently they came upon the building which lay about the hot springs. They entered this building and Sing Fu was soon immersed in the heated water where he stayed for a period of several hours. When he came out of the water it was night. The night was cold. As rapidly as they could the pair made their way through the narrow alleys which led to their residence. "I am very cold," Sing Fu said to his companion. "In my old limbs I feel the hell of age."

They came to a little open place at the intersection

of two streets. Rising against the night sky lifted the lines of a high structure. Sing Fu looked at it for a moment. "It is white," he said to the boy beside him. "It is the White Pagoda. The Starry Tower Pagoda. The pinnacle of that pagoda touched the skies until the dragon burrowed under the three hills of Foochow and shook it down. On that night a comet was seen. It was a night of death and many people lay in the streets with the wreck of their houses upon them."

While Sing Fu was speaking a shooting star burned across an arc of the heavens before them.

"Ai! This too is a night of death. An evil omen."

From the dark interior of the house beside them a wooden bell boomed its slow melancholy tones into the black night.

Sing Fu seemed overcome with some paroxysm of fear. "Let us fly from here," he chattered to the boy beside him, "or else before the year is out I shall know death. The star and the bell!"

When they had regained their house the man lay for the balance of the night shivering with fear. Hong Chung Lu did not understand this. "What has the star and the bell to do with the dissolution of substantial flesh?"

On the next day Sing Fu was silent and thereafter for many weeks until the year was dying he was no

longer the gay companion whom the boy had known. The evil genii seemed to have found residence within the breast of the red-headed man, for all of his days and nights were spent in trying to cough forth these spirits of disaster.

On a day when the branches of trees were black against the sky the boy played softly on his mandolin and to the air he sang the words of Chen Sho Chi:

“See! The autumn leaves are falling,
List! The north birds’ loudly calling;
Swift their southern flight.
Dread the mountain’s winter bareness,
Robbed of summer’s leafy fairness,
Chilled by dreary night.”

His fingers instinctively repeated the last few notes of the music.

Sing Fu called to him. “Come beside me. It snowed today,” the man said gently. “Snow is white and means death. Three is the number of life. My hair is red and so is yours. You are the son of my spirit. Somewhere in this world you will encounter the person who would have made the third member of our house. You have been a good son. There is silver in the black box in the ground beneath my bed. Now I shall mount to the skies on the back of the Celestial Dragon.”

Sing Fu closed his eyes. The boy thought that his companion slept, but at dawn Sing Fu had not awakened and in a little while the boy came to real-

ize that death had entered the house. He fled the scene of his sorrow, taking with him nothing except the favourite flute of Sing Fu. Abandoned were the gifts which members of his several audiences had given him. Abandoned was the box of silver money under Sing Fu's bed. The instinct of flight persisted and by nightfall he had departed through the East Gate of the city. At midnight in the hills beyond the city he began the soft music of Twin Butterflies but at the point where the air marks the death of the big butterfly a single note of the measure lifted softly into the night and then abruptly the music stopped.

II

On a day late in January when the first almond blossoms lay like snow in the bleak branches of the trees, Hong Chung Lu stopped at a wayside shrine where a Buddhist priest was chanting a prayer in Sanscrit. When the priest stopped shrieking the boy questioned him.

"What is that you were saying?"

The priest knew as little of the meaning of his Sanscrit as did Hong Chung Lu. "I am saying that all who pass this way must pay four copper cash or suffer from the evil spirits of Black Mountain."

"I have only two cash in my girdle," the boy replied.

"Hand them to me," the priest demanded. "Hand them over and only the unpaid half of the evil spirits will bother you."

The boy gave the priest the two bronze coins. The priest picked up a hollow wooden carp which he rattled three times. "This is a lucky day of the Plum Moon. Today, before the evil spirits descend you will experience good fortune."

The boy continued his journey, half regretting that his purse had not contained another two cash, but his regrets were presently superseded by speculations concerning the good fortune which the Buddhist priest had predicted. At a turn in the road below a steep hill he came upon a camp of fifty strange men, the like of whom in all his experience he had never seen.

"Hola!" he said to one of a little group seated upon the ground. "Why are so many queer men together?"

"This is the theatre troupe of the Chang Pan of Hangchow. He is the greatest Chang Pan in the world, and we are the greatest actors in the world. I am the greatest of them all. What is that you have there?"

"This is the flute of Sing Fu, a red-headed man who was my father."

"Play upon it, boy, that we may be entertained."

Hong Chung Lu had no sooner finished the shrill music of the Almond Flower Song than he found grouped about him the entire assemblage. From the cries of applause which greeted him he knew that he had pleased his audience.

"Where is the master of the chest? This boy must come with us." The leader of the troupe stepped out of the crowd.

"Young boy," he said to Hong Chung Lu, "I am master of the costume chest. In the great chest are costumes which if you desire will adorn your body when we stage our next performance. You will be an actor of the fourth class. At first you will be a Hua-Lien, superior to desperadoes and better than floury-faced clowns or soldiers. Servants and inn-keepers, cooks and water-carriers shall wait upon you and in five years perhaps you can be an actor of the third class—a member of the Siao-Sheng. Who knows but what time may bring to you some military part in some great play or that you may become a full Lao Sheng."

Hong Chung Lu did not understand the jargon of the master of the chest but he sensed its meaning.

"How much money is a Hua Lien paid?"

"Beside your food you will get two dollars each year. At first you will play the part of a girl and

then of a lady. After the first year I will give you four dollars for each succeeding year."

"And the food?" Hong Chung Lu questioned.

"Every delicacy the land affords such as rice and fish and twice a year a feast of the meat of pigs."

"I will go with you," Hong Chung Lu agreed.

"That is well," commented the master of the chest. "Play now upon thy flute to entertain these members of my company. Tomorrow we shall enter the village of Ying Chow Fu, and by mid-summer the people of Hangchow will know our skill. At Hangchow I shall give you one dollar—the half of your yearly wage."

During the course of ten years Hong Chung Lu journeyed with the outcast actors through various villages in the Southern provinces. One year, at late summer the troupe came to the borders of the city of Hangchow. At the first performance on the crude stage beyond the city wall, the food which he had that day enjoyed, together with one hundred cash which lay within his girdle, gave Hong Chung Lu a spiritual uplift which contributed to the excellence of his performance. In the audience at evening was a man who discovered in the young Chinese musician the embryo of talent with which to charm the dollars of a Western audience.

On the sixth day after the play began the final act

concluded and then to Hong Chung Lu came the American. "Tell this young man I own eight theatres in the United States and that each of them is larger than the Chinese Imperial Palace," the American said to his interpreter. "Tell him that I would like to have him come with me to the United States."

Hong Chung Lu listened to the interpreter. "I have food," he objected, "and I have cash. I am a favourite of the company. Why should I go beyond the boundaries of China?"

The American listened to the translation of the young Chinaman's reply, and answered in one word: "Money."

"I have money—more than a hundred cash are in my pocket at this moment."

"Ask him how much he gets for a year's work," the American directed.

"He says he gets six dollars for a year's work," the interpreter answered.

"Tell him I will pay him five hundred times as much as he now gets."

Ten days later Hong Chung Lu sailed from Shang-hai on the *Fushimi Maru* of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha.

At his first performance before a Sunday afternoon audience in Seattle, Hong Chung Lu drew about six languid hands from a bored assemblage

which had not fully recovered from a perspiring trio of Swiss tumblers.

"Jazz it up!" the manager said to him. "Like this." The American made some strange gestures.

It was difficult to introduce much jazz business into a flute turn and at the evening performance the vaudeville audience showed a minimum of appreciation. Hong Chung Lu sensed his failure as an entertainer. He ate his late supper alone. In spite of the thin roll of banknotes in his pocket he nevertheless sought to gratify his appetite for turtle meat. "You have got one piece turtle?" he asked the waiter.

"Sure," that worthy replied, returning a few minutes later with an order of ham and eggs. "Coffee?"

He returned to his hotel after midnight. He found the American vaudeville man waiting for him in the lobby of the hotel. "Your room is changed to a hotel down the street," the American told him. "They're full up here."

Before he went to sleep that night Hong Chung Lu realized that the radiance of his future had been dimmed by two or three conditions over which he had no control. He reviewed the sources of imperfection which might contribute to the failure of his act. He knew that never in a million years would

he understand the complex technique of the jazz business. As near as he could define it, jazz was a matter of duplicating a crazy man's actions, but for crazy men the state provided stone houses.

"These people are queer," he thought as he went to sleep.

He played his week in Seattle and finished a rainy three days in Portland. In the car from Portland to San Francisco he sat alone throughout the trip.

He played a week in San Francisco. On Wednesday night the manager handed him four dollars. "You're finished," the American said. "Taking out your transportation you have got four dollars left. Here it is. That's all."

At midnight Hong Chung Lu left the theatre. A light rain was falling. "Tomorrow the earth will be moist with the tears of Heaven," Hong Chung Lu reflected. He walked to Market Street where he stood for a little while observing the midnight traffic. Then he retraced his steps to Grant Avenue.

Over the crest of the incline which stretched before him into Chinatown he heard the crash of a sudden volley of firecrackers. He questioned one of his passing countrymen. "What lucky mandarin is dead now?" he asked.

"No mandarin is dead," the Chinaman replied. "It is the first night of the New Year."

Hong Chung Lu stood silent for a little while

digesting his surprise. "There are some things which a man forgets easily. Perhaps I can as easily forget the death of my ambition. An audience of foreign devils is hard to please. I am a man of China and with men of China I shall make my home."

He returned quickly to his little room at the obscure hotel. He packed his two silk costumes tightly into a small round basket. Carrying the basket and his flute he walked into the night. Ten minutes later he was idling along Grant Avenue, deep in the heart of San Francisco's Chinatown. From all about him crashes of exploding firecrackers drowned the normal noises of the night. The gutters were littered with wet areas of vermilion paper. The sidewalks were blotched with the crimson fragments of exploded firecrackers. Beside him old Chinamen shuffled along in the mist, carrying baskets of lilies to their friends. Young Chinamen walked rapidly toward no place in particular. At each street corner were two or three plainclothes operatives of the police department. Fronting the boarded windows of the stores red lanterns added their color to the pearl painted fog. Down the street the strenuous music of a merry-go-round piped its harsh lure into the ears of excited Oriental nickel spenders. From behind closed windows above the heads of the crowd the music of Chinese orchestras

added its discord to the explosive crescendo of fireworks.

Hong Chung Lu stepped lightly over a string of banging firecrackers. He stopped beside one of the temporary fruitstands on the edge of the sidewalk and purchased an orange. The orange seemed to accent a demand for heavier food. He realized his hunger.

"Always it seems I am hungry." He made a mental inventory of his resources. "These twelve American dollars will last me but a little while. I must find work. But first I shall eat."

He entered a doorway across the street and mounted the stairs to the third story of the building. He walked into a brilliantly lighted room in which were a dozen tables spread with a repast appropriate for the New Year celebration. Against the front wall of the room, between two windows a Chinese orchestra was busy with an interminable movement from a native opera.

Hong Chung Lu seated himself at a table. "Hola!" he said to one of the waiters. "Bring me food." The spirit of the music reacted in him. "Bring me rich food." He thought of the twelve dollars which he owned. For a moment he was tempted to countermand his order and then he plunged. "Have you any turtles?" he said.

"There are three reserved for the proprietor."

"How big are they?"

"Two are six inch turtles," the waiter replied, "and there is a giant Ch'en seven inches big."

"Bring in the giant," ordered Hong Chung Lu.

"That will be seven dollars," the waiter replied. "The price is one dollar an inch, measured across the mountain of the giant's shell."

Hong Chung Lu counted out seven dollars. "Serve him on his own shell and see that no chicken flesh nor dog meat is substituted."

The waiter bowed low. He summoned an assistant and in ten minutes a service had been spread before Hong Chung Lu fit for the banquet table of a mandarin.

While he was waiting for the arrival of his dinner Hong Chung Lu walked over to where the Chinese orchestra was adding its horror to the night. At intervals of ten minutes there was a lull in the music during which the audience had opportunity to summon enough courage to endure the succeeding torture. The music was suddenly still.

Hong Chung Lu addressed the flute player. "Give me that flute," he said brusquely. The flute player handed over the instrument. Hong Chung Lu looked at it carefully.

"Now," he said to himself, "I shall answer the questions within me. If I am a failure as a musician I shall know it within the next ten minutes." He

bowed to the assemblage in the restaurant. He put the flute to his lips and into the noises within the room there filtered a silver strain of exquisite harmony. When he had finished the fears which his failure before American audiences had inspired were lost in the crash of applause which greeted him.

He hesitated for a moment and then bowing low he again addressed his audience. "I shall play for you the First Moon Lily Song."

The music left his hearers hushed. Those of them who had known China were suddenly back again in the far country of their youth where crowded cities verge irresolute canals that wander inland from the yellow sea.

"Ai," they breathed. "That is magic music. In the song of that flute the falling blossoms of life's springtime strike gently on the silver strings of age."

Hong Chung Lu returned the flute to its owner and seated himself at the table where his dinner awaited him. When he had finished with his food his thoughts lingered for a little while upon a bite of turtle meat which he had eaten at evening in the shadows of the high hills that lifted from the river near the place of his birth.

"The giant Ch'en commanded me to look upon the world from the fastness of the high hills. Life is naught but a mountain range. I have known the hills and valleys which bound life's level plain. I

have yet to accomplish the great heights from which the whole world of experience can be seen and I have still to pay the debt of love I owe to Sing Fu who is dead."

His reverie was interrupted. The proprietor of the restaurant stood beside him. "You are a master of music," this man said. "If you are not engaged I will pay you well for playing to my patrons each night."

Hong Chung Lu smiled at the compliment. "In the cold fogs of heaven one finds the warm fleece of Providence. I am without employment. How much will you pay me for my music?"

"Your food," the owner of the restaurant replied, "and for each night one silver dollar."

Hong Chung Lu thought of his depleted purse.

"I will play for you," he said. "Each night I will play the music of China."

"I have no home," Hong Chung Lu said later to the owner of the restaurant. "Tonight I would like your permission to sleep on one of your tables after your guests have departed."

The restaurant keeper gave his assent to the proposal. "You are welcome, homeless one," he said. Before morning Hong Chung Lu curled up on a table and closed his eyes but sleep did not come to him.

At dawn the rain ceased. Hong Chung Lu walked to a table near one of the windows in the

east wall of the deserted room. He picked up a mandolin. From his pocket he took the shell of the turtle which he had eaten. Upon the table above the turtle shell he fixed a spray of almond blossoms in a jade green vase. To this impromptu shrine he softly played the music of Twin Butterflies.

His wings are heavy,
The way is long.
His soul is weary,
Hushed his song.
Love that was all of life
Lived but to die.
Sorrow has crushed him,
Lone Butterfly.

Word went about Chinatown that a master musician would entertain the patrons of the restaurant, and soon the place was thronged by patrons whose appreciation brought great joy to the heart of Hong Chung Lu and solid cash to the owner of the restaurant. After a few nights, when the success of his music had been demonstrated, Hong Chung Lu sought a residence appropriate to his new status. On a street lying above Grant Avenue he found a vacant cellar. A flight of stairs led from the sidewalk down to a narrow pair of rooms. The front room of the cellar had for its boundary the retaining wall of the street which it fronted. The back room gave upon a vacant lot, one side of which was screened from the street by a billboard whose

area was interrupted by a gate large enough for the passage of a loaded truck.

Hong Chung Lu rented the two room cellar and with it the little yard which lay behind it. In the back room he built his bed out of scrap lumber which he bought from a Chinese carpenter. He covered the walls of both rooms with brilliant coloured paper.

He cleaned up the rubbish which littered the yard back of his cellar. Some of the things which he found in the débris were salvaged for his personal use. Some other things, notably a steel framed baby carriage which lacked only the two front wheels, he sold to residents of the Chinese colony.

From these sales he derived substantial additions to his growing purse. With the slow passage of the months he came finally to devote his idle mornings to collecting things which their owners termed valueless, odds and ends of furniture and a multiple array of discarded junk which derived from the march of individual ambition. Presently he found that the income from his professional services at the restaurant was only half of that which came to him from his junk business.

He discussed his affairs with the proprietor of the restaurant. "Each night for more than seven years I have entertained your people who come here," he said. "On the first night of the First Moon I shall

play for you for the last time." On the first night of the First Moon, Hong Chung Lu played his farewell to the man who had befriended him.

At midnight, through the noise and the débris of the welcome with which Chinatown greeted this New Year, he returned to his establishment. Arrived at his house he unlocked a trunk which stood beside the front wall of the cellar. The trunk was half filled with live turtles. Out of the dark of this treasure chest he selected a ten-inch turtle and presently he sat at his table in the back room of the cellar, enjoying the flavour of this little brother of the giant Ch'en.

III

On this New Years Eve into Chinatown from the Latin Quarter west of Telegraph Hill, walked a woman carrying a baby bundled in ragged winding cloths. The woman's physical distress was spoken in the manner of her walk. She dragged her slow way from Stockton Street down the inclined sidewalk toward Grant Avenue. At the steps which led to the musician's cellar she collapsed. The bundled baby which she carried hung for an instant to the coping of the steps which led to the cellar of Hong Chung Lu, and then it rolled downward into the darkness and lodged gently against the door which

lay between the street and the room wherein the musician made his home.

From the corner below on Grant Avenue, one of the plainclothes squad saw the woman fall. He called his associate and the pair walked quickly to the side of the figure lying prone upon the sidewalk.

"Booze?"

"No chance. Ring for the wagon."

One of the operatives walked back to Grant Avenue and rang in for the patrol car. When he returned his companion spoke quickly of the tragedy which lay before them.

"All gone. Croaked. Probably starved to death." The pair picked up the woman and carried her to Grant Avenue. Despite the lateness of the hour, by the time the patrol arrived a crowd had collected. "The morgue," one of the plainclothes men directed. Three minutes later the patrol swung under the green light of the morgue behind the city jail.

Near the place of the woman's death Hong Chung Lu, in his cellar, munched reflectively upon the last few bits of the ten-inch turtle. "The delights of life increase with the flight of the years," he commented. He reviewed the events of his youth, his wanderings, the hardships he had known and the hours of happiness which stood distinct against the background of his yesterdays. He thought of the

red-headed man of Foochow,—the man whose love had meant life to him.

"I owe my life to him," Hong Chung Lu reflected. "May his be the pleasures of the Seventh Paradise! When I encounter the third red-headed member of our trio I shall repay in love and kindness the things I received at his hands." He lighted a stick of incense in a jade-green vase which stood before a shrine in the corner of the room. "I shall play a little song of devotion to this friend of my helpless days," he said to himself. "First, that there may be no interruption I will fix the steel guards against the evils of the night."

He mounted the stairs which led from the room to the street. He hooked three brass padlocks in their hasps against the door. He reached for a hinged iron grill with which the door was reinforced at night. As he did this he saw through a dusty glass panel a bundle lying upon the steps where it had fallen against the base of the door. Quickly he unlocked the padlocks. He opened the door carefully and caught the bundle as it rolled toward him. He laid the bundle on the table before the shrine in a corner of the room. He fastened the door and locked the grill across its area. Then he turned to the bundle upon the table. A moment later a man-child six months old lay before him. The baby was red-headed.

"This is a gift which the Night Gods have sent me, knowing the sorrow which dwells in my heart. This is the third member of the trio! The hair of this man-child is red. "Welcome, Vermilion Top! Long have I awaited thee. This is Fulfilment!"

He cradled the child in the coverlet of his own bed. "Food first," he mused, remembering the days of his own childhood. He lighted a fire in his stove and five minutes later the baby was busy with a little ration of warm milk which dripped from the end of a twisted cloth.

Throughout the night with the child beside him Hong Chung Lu lay awake. At dawn for a little while the guardian slept. When he awakened he made haste to fix two small bits of red paper on the outer panels of the door leading to the street but lest the announcement of the arrival of the new resident might excite the curiosity of his countrymen Hong Chung Lu dimmed the brilliancy of the red paper with a smear of moist earth.

IV

With the passage of the months Chinatown came to know that in the cellar of Hong Chung Lu there lived a baby and that Hong Chung Lu called this red-headed child his son.

Chinatown asked no questions.

When the boy was sixteen years old Hong Chung Lu wrote a red paper announcement which he pasted in the midst of a litter of similar posters on one of the dead walls near Grant Avenue.

"A new man has come to my house," the announcement read. "He is my son, Seu Lin."

A little while later the Musician gave his attention to the boy's future in the world of men. He called on the Portuguese proprietor of a little grocery store near the frontier where Chinatown melts into the Latin Quarter. "I wish my son to become a merchant and a man of business," the Musician explained to this Arcos Borbao. "If you like he will work for you without payment for five years."

The Portuguese shop-keeper saw in this offer a means of gaining for himself some further share of profitable Chinese patronage. "I will be glad to teach him the methods of American business," Borbao agreed. "Send him to me." The Portuguese sealed the bargain with a repulsive smile.

In Borbao's grocery store young Seu Lin was busy from morning until night with boxes and packages, salt fish, rancid meat, questionable eggs, decaying vegetables and all the litter that encumbered the shelves and counters about him.

Hong Chung Lu considered his property and the substantial status which he enjoyed as an old time resident of Chinatown. Thinking of his adopted

son, for awhile he was half tempted to transfer his residence to more elaborate quarters, and then he decided that the humble scene of his first years of life in San Francisco must continue to be in the place of happiness which he called home. He talked it over with Seu Lin. "I never could be happier than this," the boy commented. "I would not want to leave this house, Papa Hong."

Abandoning his unselfish ambition to establish himself in more elaborate surroundings, Hong Chung Lu enlarged his horizon by a more pretentious attack on the sources of the junk which accumulated in the yard behind the cellar. It became necessary for him to employ a husky assistant in the junk yard and another one as personal conductor of the one-horse wagon which conveyed the obsolete trophies to be added to the litter in the junk yard.

"When my son learns the methods of American business, then I shall give him this great industry of mine," Hong Chung Lu resolved.

With his increased income the junk dealing musician permitted himself to indulge in a more elaborate menu. At morning and at night the food table in the back room of the cellar came to be more heavily laden. Turtle meat, which had been an exceptional luxury was enjoyed almost daily by the Musician and his adopted son. From various sources in the United States, in the Tallahatchie

swamps of Northern Mississippi, the reaches of the Everglades and from the salt marshes of the California coast various turtle catchers dispatched to Hong Chung Lu the choicest products of their industry. At times two or three crates and barrels in the cellar would be filled with terrapin and soft-shelled turtles from the South, eatable tortoises of the West and the horrible thirteen scaled water wolves of the Florida swamps.

"These shelled beasts demand food but once a year," the Musician said to his son, "but every month we shall feed them so that they may furnish fat flesh for our table."

Presently the stock of turtles became so large that they rolled free about the floor of the back room.

The Musician, rising from his bed one night, slipped on a sluggish specimen which had been retrieved in Mississippi near Lake Cormorant. "This has become a blasted nuisance," he said in Chinese. His son awakened. "What did you say?" he asked.

"Nothing," the Musician replied. "Nothing. Tomorrow we shall find a new domicile for these crawling brutes."

On the following day the Musician discussed with several of his countrymen the advisability of building a pen for his stock of turtles. One of them, who had lived for many years in Chinatown, made a suggestion. "Fronting the wall of your cellar is an

abandoned cistern that was used by the fire department in the early days. It is forgotten. The street surface has sealed it with three feet of concrete. There may be a little seepage water in it but probably it is dry."

The abandoned cistern idea appealed to Hong Chung Lu. He had a doorway cut through the concrete retaining wall that formed the front barrier of his domicile. The workmen burrowed for ten feet through the clay until they encountered the surface of the wall of the circular brick cistern. It was the work of an hour to drive an opening through these bricks. Hong Chung Lu lighted a candle and held it from him into the echoing tank. Before him the faint rays of the candle showed him a circular opening twenty feet in diameter. The bottom of the tank was covered with water. He tied a stone to a string and sounded the water, discovering that its depth was less than one foot. He walked to the kitchen of his cellar and began transferring his stock of turtles to the black interior of the abandoned cistern. By nightfall the work was accomplished. Within a month he had enlarged the doorway of the tank and fixed across the opening a hinged door of heavy wood. His junk wagon was impressed for the purpose of hauling sand from Golden Gate Park during spare hours and presently against half the perimeter of the tank there lay a little sand beach on which a score or

more of turtles were wont to vary their liquid environment with a more stable resting place.

A bright red square of silk suspended above the door of the tank cut off all suggestion of what lay beyond. "This is indeed an admirable arrangement," Hong Chung Lu said to his son one night. "We have food of first quality in a place where it cannot be stolen. We could spend a hundred years in this cellar in comfort and security." The Musician picked up a flute from a table before him. "I will play the Song of Contentment," he said.

Seu Lin listened but the lines of contentment did not discover themselves upon his face.

The Musician laid down his flute. "My son," he said, "what is troubling you? The press of business. Your relations with your employer?"

"It is nothing," the young man replied. "It is nothing,—except that I do not think my associate is a man of honour."

Some days later an express company delivered to the Musician's door a heavy box three feet square and nearly two yards long. Hong Chung Lu tumbled the box down his cellar stairs. He read the address and the labels upon the box. "This will be from Lum Yat, the laundryman at the city of Clarksdale in the state of Mississippi." He read a half dozen Chinese characters painted on the address

label. "He warns me to beware of the two great water wolves herein."

The Musician picked up a hatchet and set about breaking the top from the box which lay before him. One of the panels of the box came away under the blows of the hatchet. Hong Chung Lu looked into the box. He saw therein two great turtles whose rough repulsive shells bore witness of their great age. Each of the thirteen armoured segments of their shells was larger than a man's two hands.

Hong Chung Lu shifted the box to a position near the door of the turtle tank. He broke away the remaining cover of the box with several heavy blows of the hatchet. With an iron bar he dislodged the occupants of the box. One of them snapped savagely at the bar with his parrot-like beak. "You are indeed a wolf," commented Hong Chung Lu. "Twin giants. Twin brothers of the Giant Ch'en. There! You are safe within the tank. On some future day I shall have a great feast and invite a dozen of my friends to eat you."

He stood for a moment looking at the pair of great turtles where they lay upon the little artificial beach within the tank. A four-inch turtle rested on the sand in front of one of the water wolves. The big turtle's neck struck from beneath his armour. An instant later the smaller turtle's shell was ripped

from its owner's quivering tissues. The cannibal water wolf proceeded deliberately to enjoy the repast which his savage skill had earned.

The Musician acted quickly. "Hola!" he exclaimed. He summoned his assistant from the junk yard back of the kitchen. "I have a pair of hard shelled fiends who must have domiciles unto themselves, else they will soon have eaten the last of their little brothers." The assistant brought a dozen heavy planks and some lengths of steel wire. Hong Chung Lu courageously descended into the tank. As he did so one of the giant turtles started for him. He fended the enemy off with an iron bar and after an hour's exciting work the cannibals were safely separated from their fellows by the wire bound planks of a substantial cage.

"There, great ones. Until the day of execution that will be your home."

When the Musician's son arrived at evening Hong Chung Lu told him of the pair of giant turtles.

"It will cost much money to feed them," the young man commented.

"We can afford to feed them," the Musician returned. "How are your affairs at the store of the Portuguese?"

"Not enough purchases are made to pay the expenses of the store, and yet each month Borbao seems to grow more prosperous."

"Perhaps he has other business interests that we know not of."

"He has no other business interests."

But in this the boy was wrong. Each month from Portugal Borbao received three cases of sardines. These he invariably inspected himself, and although Seu Lin had not noticed it, two or three tins of sardines from each box failed to find their resting place with their fellows upon the shelves of the store.

These tins had covered the miles from Portugal to San Francisco but they had not been packed by the fishermen of Portugal. On the bright surface of these segregated tins two drops of solder lay instead of one. The tins had been prepared and packed on the China coast at Macao, where their contents had been cooked in one of the hundred opium kettles in the opium factory of that Portuguese colony.

On this night that Seu Lin spoke to his foster-father concerning the integrity of the business affairs of his Portuguese associate, Borbao was actively engaged in the illicit traffic from which he derived the substance of his income.

Shortly before midnight the Portuguese removed from the bottom of a little locked trunk in his living room above the grocery store two sardine tins. He put on his overcoat and placed the sardine tins in the right hand pocket of his coat. He walked

toward the centre of the city down Stockton Street. Where Stockton Street dives into the tunnel which lies between Chinatown and downtown San Francisco the Portuguese looked behind him for a moment. Except for two lone pedestrians the street was deserted. He walked into the Stockton Street tunnel along the sidewalk on the west-side. The lights of a streetcar clattering up the grade toward him flared on the arched interior of the tunnel. Borbao waited idly until the car had passed, and then in the obscurity accentuated by the dim lights overhead he continued his course south. He approached a bricked up doorway which had been cut in the tunnel along the sidewalk on the west-side. In this brick barrier a hole had been broken. Four feet above the sidewalk six courses of bricks had been removed for a distance of a foot.

The Portuguese paused at this hole in the brick bulkhead. His right hand carrying the two sardine tins reached into the opening broken in the bricks. "Arcos!" he said. His hand came back carrying a roll of currency. He resumed his journey through the tunnel.

A block behind the Portuguese a marching figure increased its pace until within a hundred feet of Borbao at the instant the opium transfer was consummated. The shadow followed Borbao along Stockton Street out of the tunnel entrance.

"I think that Portugee grocery bird—Borbaos name is—is mixed up in the hop stuff, chief," the shadow said to the central operative of the Federal narcotic squad at nine o'clock the next morning. "Have Jimmy take a spot on him during the day and I'll pick him up at night."

"The dope is sure drifting in," the chief returned. "I never thought his dinky grocery store made a living for him. Look him over."

Thereafter, for a space of four days and nights, three operatives of the narcotic squad watched every movement that Borbao made but not until the fourth night did he venture to the Stockton Street tunnel. On this journey a half block behind him there followed a man from the narcotic squad. Entering the tunnel the shadow was within a hundred feet of the Portuguese. Borbao paused for an instant at the opening in the bricked bulkhead cut in the south side of the Stockton Street Tunnel. When the shadow came to this point he looked at it carefully and in an instant, from his experience he had constructed a fabric of surmise which closely approximated the truth.

"I'll trail this bird home and frisk him just for luck the next time he starts out."

On a night six days later Borbao left his store. At the corner of Stockton Street a plainclothes man spoke to him. "Come with me a minute." The

Portuguese continued his course for a distance of ten feet, and then his wrists were grasped by two men who shouldered up beside him.

"It's a pinch, Borbao," one of them said.

They took the suspect to a room adjoining the office of the chief of the narcotic squad at headquarters. There they searched him. "Forty dollars, some letters and a knife; a bunch of keys, a lead pencil and two cans of sardines," the operative reported.

The chief of the narcotic squad, wise to a thousand ways that are dark, gave an order. "Open up the sardines," he said.

Ten minutes later the Portuguese was behind the bars and at his store three plainclothes men were diligently searching for his cache of opium.

Seu Lin protested at this invasion of his employer's store, but at his first word one of the plainclothes men turned to him.

"Shut up, Chinky! It's a pinch." In Borbao's trunk they discovered twelve tins of opium. When they left the store they took Seu Lin with them. Twenty minutes later he was behind the bars in a separate cell. "I know nothing of this opium affair," he protested. "My father is Hong Chung Lu, the great Chinese musician."

"A half-breed!" The recording clerk voiced his contempt in three words. "The looks of a white

man and the foxy brains of a Chink. No wonder you and the greaser beat the game so long."

In his cellar at evening the Musician waited long for his son to join him at supper.

An hour after the chairs had been placed at the table a voice called to him down the stairway. "Your son is in the white man's jail."

Hong Chung Lu clattered to the top of the stairway but failed to discover the source of the announcement of his son's misfortune. He made his way rapidly to Borbao's store but it was closed. In front of it stood a plainclothes man.

On one of the dead walls littered with red paper bulletins Hong Chung Lu read an announcement which had been posted within the hour. "The keeper of the grocery store and Seu Lin, son of Hong Chung Lu, are arrested by the white police for selling opium."

As quickly as his feet could carry him Hong Chung Lu went to where his son was confined. At the door of the jail he was refused admittance. "You Chinks are all alike. Beat it before I lock you up!" the man in uniform threatened.

The Musician walked slowly back to his cellar. He ate his supper in solitude. He reviewed meanwhile the factors of evidence which memory contributed.

On the next day he called at the office of an attor-

ney. "My son is arrested," he said. "He is charged with selling opium." The pair called at the jail and the attorney gained an audience with Seu Lin.

Hong Chung Lu asked his foster son one question.

"On my word of honour," the boy replied, "before your gods and mine I knew nothing of Borbao's criminal industry."

A great weight lifted from the Musician's heart. "All will be well, my son," he promised. "The truth is first. Truth is greater than death."

When the case came to trial the Musician's son was railroaded and Borbao was released. "A frame-up," the Portuguese said in his own defence. "That bird is a slick one." To himself he reflected that a fall-guy was good insurance against the disaster which seemed to attend his illicit activity.

A month after Seu Lin had been sent to the penitentiary to begin a ten-year sentence Hong Chung Lu visited him. "I am told that for ten years your life must be spent within this hell," the Musician said to his son.

"Not ten years, Papa Hong," the boy replied, "If I am good and if I do my work I will be released almost four years before that time."

That afternoon the Musician returned to San Francisco. He went directly to his residence. He sat for an hour in the front room of his cellar over-

come by a cloud of melancholy which presently gave way to black despair. Then suddenly his mood lightened. He reached for his flute. Softly he played *Twin Butterflies*. With the last note of the air his memory pictured the Foochow chapter of his life. He sensed the wrong which had obtained in the conviction of his son. Deep in his heart he felt a quickened venom—a passion of malignant hatred for the Portuguese. He lifted his flute and into the glaring day shrieked the wild notes of the *Hue Gow Chung*—The Blood Song of the Mountain Men.

“When the gods fail a man may balance the ledgers of blood with the steel of his own strong hands.” He called to his assistant who was busy in the junk yard back of the cellar. “When your companion returns I would speak with both of you.”

At evening the Musician’s second employee returned. Hong Chung Lu talked with his two men for a little while. They left him and went to the junk yard behind the cellar. A minute later they drove from it in the junk wagon. Late that night they returned. In the wagon, half concealed under a dozen broken chairs lay a great basket. The two Chinamen unloaded the wagon. While they were at work the Musician appeared at the back doorway of the cellar.

“You succeeded?” he asked.

"Master, we have succeeded." Presently the pair came toward the cellar door carrying the great basket between them. They set the basket down in the front room of the cellar.

The Musician dismissed his two employees. He locked the back door of his cellar and across the front door, leading to the street he fixed the heavy steel grill. He returned and seated himself at the table near which lay the basket. His reverie lasted for half an hour. Then he got up and broke the three fastenings which confined the lid of the basket. In the basket bound with fine catgut cords, lay the Portuguese. A crimson silk handkerchief was stretched tightly between his open jaws. His lips were bared in a repulsive smile.

Hong Chung Lu lifted the limp bulk of the Portuguese from the basket. "Wake up," he said. "One little pill of opium cannot make you sleep forever." He placed the Portuguese on a heavy ebony chair. He stripped the strings from a half dozen of his instruments of music hanging against the wall and with these catgut cords he tied the Portuguese in an erect position. The Chinaman seated himself a little way from his inert companion. For half the night he waited patiently for the Portuguese to regain consciousness. It was after midnight before Borbao's eyelids lifted.

Presently the malignant glitter of the man's eyes spoke of returning life.

Hong Chung Lu addressed his prisoner. "You can hear me now. Because of you my son must rot for six long years within the stone walls of a hell that rightfully is yours. . . . Listen while I play my promise to you."

The Musician picked up his flute and into Borbao's ears shrieked the torturing finale of The Blood Song.

The music stopped. "That is my promise. On the day that my son is released then shall I set you free."

With the quick movements of an old spider Hong Chung Lu wove replacement strings above the ones which bound the Portuguese. Presently, except for his new set of restraining cords Borbao was free of the chair to which he had been bound.

The Musician selected a little stick of incense from a silver box. He turned his head away in lighting it. He held it for ten seconds under Borbao's nostrils. "You will sleep for an hour or two." The head of the Portuguese sank and his lids masked his venomous eyes.

The musician swept aside the silk curtain which concealed the door to the turtle pen. He opened the door. He returned to where Borbao drooped

listless between the arms of the ebony chair. He picked up the Portuguese and carried him to the door of the turtle pen. He cast Borbao from him into the darkness. The Portuguese landed heavily on the little sand beach four feet below. The Musician stepped lightly down a short ladder which led to the floor of the turtle pen. He worked rapidly at the catgut strings which bound Borbao's hands and feet. From the mouth of the Portuguese Hong Chung Lu removed the crimson gag.

"Enjoy your liberty," he said. "Now you are as free as my beloved son."

He mounted the little ladder which led to his cellar room. He turned and locked the door to the turtle pen. During the night the existing fastenings were augmented by the addition of four steel hasps. Dawn was breaking when the Musician had finished. He felt the fatigue of the night's work heavy upon his body. For an hour he slept.

Each month Hong Chung Lu visited his son in the penitentiary. Much of the time between these visits the Musician spent sitting before a little shrine which he fixed at the head of the boy's bed in his cellar. For hours each day he sat before the shrine playing softly on his flute.

On his eleventh visit to his son he carried a little bowl in which grew the roots of three lily bulbs.

From these bulbs lifted six flowering stalks. "Tomorrow is the first day of the First Moon," he mused. "These blossoms speak a promise of new life. My son will know happiness in the message which these lilies bring."

An hour later he entered the great iron gates of the penitentiary. He made his way to the visitors' room. "I wish to see my son Seu Lin," he said to the clerk.

"Seu Lin died last week. Lungs," the clerk informed him.

Hong Chung Lu stood motionless for ten seconds and then the bowl of lilies crashed from his hands upon the tile floor.

On the train going toward San Francisco his head bowed a little and two hard lines appeared at the corners of his mouth. Except for this he gave no outward sign of the torture that raged within his soul. "An intelligent man recognizes the will of heaven."

At San Francisco he returned to his cellar.

At midnight into the street noises of the welcome with which Chinatown greeted the New Year there shrieked the notes of The Blood Song. The Musician laid down his flute. From a little silver box he took three sticks of incense. He drew the silk curtain from where it hung over the door that led to

the turtle tank. At a little lamp he lighted the three sticks of incense and threw them quickly through the wicket into the turtle pen.

"This is the perfume of sleep," he said. The silk curtain dropped to its place. Hong Chung Lu returned to his chair before the shrine at the head of his son's bed. He began to play the gentle music of Twin Butterflies but with the fifth note he laid the flute down.

For ten minutes he sat motionless. He rose to his feet. "The perfume of sleep will have accomplished its work," he said half aloud. He walked to the door of the turtle tank and removed the silk curtain. He unlocked the several locks which were before him. He opened the door and a minute later when his eyes had become accustomed to the darkness before him he stepped down the short ladder to the little sand beach.

On the wet sand lay the Portuguese. Hong Chung Lu touched the inert form with his foot. "Presently you will awaken," he said. "After a while you will sleep again—whatever is left of you."

He walked to the crude pen in which the two great turtles were confined. He poked a little stick through the bars at one of them. With all the venom of a rattlesnake the turtle struck at the stick. "Hai! Water wolf, you are ready for your work!"

With quick blows of a hatchet the Musician broke

open the cage. When he had gained the door the two turtles were out of their cage.

Hong Chung Lu closed the door of the tank behind him. The third lock of the door clicked sharply. He called softly through the wicket. "My son is dead!" A wild cry answered from within the tank.

The Musician lighted a stick of incense at the shrine beside the empty bed wherein his son had slept. He sat down and reached for his flute. Into the wild shrieks that lifted from within the turtle tank there melted the gentle music of Twin Butterflies.

Love that was all of life
Lived but to die.
Sorrow had crushed him—
Lone Butterfly.

Presently the music ended. The cries within the tank were stilled. In the house of the Musician was silence.

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SAN FRANCISCO Chinatown remembers that Sing Fang was a poet and that his sister, Sing Toy, was the most beautiful girl in the colony. In the Chinese record section at police headquarters Sing Fang is written down as a gunman of the Ling Yip Tong. The record is not correct.

In Sing Fang's sister nature apologized for a million mistakes. Through what countless centuries ran the strands of heredity which joined in the fabric of her being no man can know, but to-day on Dupont Street her name is whispered where men seek to define all that feminine perfection can mean.

The poet and his sister lived in two narrow rooms above The Falling Tear Pawn Shop in Ross Alley. Across the street from them was the malodorous establishment of Yot Gar the fish merchant, who carried a side line of chickens and vegetables and Chinese intrigue. The loft above The Falling Tear Pawn Shop had been divided down the centre by a pine partition. This partition, brown with the coating smoke of years on the poet's side

and papered with bright flowers on the other, reached to the ceiling. Except for a narrow door between the rooms the incense fumes curling above Sing Toy's shrine and the perfume of the lily blossoms on her windowsill knew no avenue of egress. Gentle adventurous vapours from the girl's room occasionally mingled with the stronger odours of food frying on the poet's cooking stove or with the strong smoke from his pipe.

The door in the pine partition was the battle line where burning greases and tobacco smoke met the perfume of lily blossoms and sweet incense and just as the coarse odours fought a losing battle before the pervading sweetness so did the beauty of Sing Toy's life soften the hard realities of the poet's life.

Poetry in Chinatown was not a commercial success and Sing Fang augmented the income he derived from spiritual investments by perspiring in the calisthenics of composition at the type cases of a Chinese newspaper. The poet walked weary miles each day in the composing room of the newspaper retrieving from the four thousand blocks such fantastic ideographs of the Cantonese dialect as were required to approximate the sense of the copy before him. Sing Fang had spent long years with the classics and the characters of the Manchu and Mongol and Wenli dialects had been graved deep in the tablets of his

memory by the sharp acid of practice and the chisels of long hours of study.

Now and then the poet's income was augmented by a silver fee paid to him by some fat Cantonese for translating the guttural sentences of the South into the cackling phrases of North China. With the money thus derived the poet lightened his sister's menu with candy and little cakes. Sometimes he bought for her wardrobe some trifling gaudy thing of tinsel. Occasionally he cashed in on his education at some banquet where for a recital of passages from the classics lasting through long hours of feasting he received a dollar. Now and then the dollar was counterfeit but for that matter so was his performance as far as the coarse ears of his audience could judge. Often while he intoned delicate sentences from the Analects his hearers' ears were choked with the gurgling of thick soup or congested with great mouthfuls of broiled pork or bean cake fried with meat.

In beautiful monotony the poet would drone groups of the seven vowels and seventeen consonants of the Mongol tongue and finally when his memory of preliminary clauses was glutted a verb would be tacked upon the long sentence. Then he would launch another orgy of phrases searching meanwhile for another proper verb and after ten thousand words

had been sung he would receive his dollar and return to his home where his sister awaited him.

Turning up Washington Street from Grant Avenue his half closed eyes would greet the three beacons that marked his home port in Ross Alley. These were a lamp post from which a thin jet of flaming gas fought its way into the fogs of night, a fire hydrant painted white and smirched with the flapping coats of pedestrians, and a cast iron pillar which supported a corner of the balcony extending over the establishment of Yut Gar, the fish merchant.

Ross Alley was hard and iron was its symbol. The alley was twelve feet wide. The Falling Tear Pawn Shop had two doors opening upon it,—a little low door for entrance and a more pretentious glass-panelled exit through which a man could walk erect and face the world with courage derived from the cash in his pocket.

Beyond the two pawn shop doors deep in the shadows of the alley was a third door which opened upon a broken staircase leading to the loft above. At midnight, waiting for the poet's returning a little green lamp burned at the head of the stairs. In his room the poet would find waiting a pot of tea poulticed in a thick cotton insulation against the chill of night. Beside the tea would be a bowl of rice. The poet would fall to on the rice and drink lustily of the warm tea. Then with this detail of his ritual

accomplished he would indulge his soul in the more spiritual business of the verses whose columns trailed upon his tablets from the eloquent points of his brushes.

Poetry to Sing Fang was the fine breath of life but it was not the deep-drawn profitable breath that strong men take from the air of a mountain top. The poet's verses were not very good and all the hours spent with his tablets and his brushes had never brought him a penny of reward. The rice and the tea of his life and the delicate foods for his sister were bought with cash derived from the prosaic business of racing around a dusty wooden floor retrieving unintelligible type for the next issue of the Chinese newspaper.

For his work he received eight dollars a week. The poet's soul fed on dreams but when rice went to nine dollars a sack his stomach was often empty and finally he came to see that unless he could derive additional income which might be exchanged for food he would presently lose his soul in the labyrinth of some black grave to which his hunger might drive it. His employer was deaf to his demands for increased pay and so he adopted a method of obtaining money common to his countrymen in the hours of their financial necessity. In his extremity he organized The Sing Fang Benevolent Loan Association, including in its membership seven of his reluctant

acquaintances. He derived therefrom a total of seventy dollars and with this money he bridged his existence for the eleven ensuing months.

On the first day of the First Moon he failed to repay the loan. The result was that he was immediately discredited in the colony and for a week his sister ate coarse rice and drank a brew made of the sifted refuse dust of tea. Throughout the week the poet starved so that his sister might have food.

It was at this zero hour that Yut Gar the fish merchant came into the poet's life.

Yut Gar and his establishment could be seen and smelled and felt and heard at any hour of the day. The flat, limp products of the sea lined the tables of his shop. The sidewalk fronting his store was forever cluttered up with corded corpses of flabby yellow pigs. Along the high walls of the store in their card index pens neurasthenic hens cackled a greeting to the hour of their doom under the falling cleavers of their executioners. Sheaves of lynched dried ducks swung in the inert air, adding to their sticky varnish additional air-born dirt.

Yut Gar shuffled about his place gurgling long Cantonese curses at the several thieves who were his salesmen. He was old and the tissues of his body were tenanted by resident devils of pain with which the gods of fatigue had cursed him. With the curling smoke of good black gum bubbling from the pin-

hole crater of the porcelain holder of his opium pipe the shackles of his fatigue could be broken, and so at intervals throughout the day Yut Gar retired for a little while to the third back room in the basement of his store and applied himself to the technique of forgetting the sorry things of life.

In this back room there were usually three or four old men of Chinatown. These old men were Cantonese, for Yut Gar had been born in Canton and spoke no other of the forty languages of China. Garrulous speech was the avocation of these old men and in their garrulous speeches were many words and few ideas. Now and then, two or three times a year perhaps, they would sit in silence for an hour and then their words were freighted with some verdict of first importance to the victim of their discourse. More than one death sentence had been spoken by these babbling old men.

The tongs of Chinatown were as various as its people and these old men were a blood tong. Whether it be the purchase of a suit of clothes or the destruction of an enemy Chinatown invests with its faith the theory that strength derives from union. Lone hand plays and one-man institutions are as rare along Grant Avenue as clean gutters in Ross Alley.

No man could know the multitude of interests to which Yut Gar had subscribed. Six times in twenty

years his name was written in the testimony of slave girls whose successful attempts at gaining their freedom had given the newspapers half a column of Chink stuff. The various Christian missions maintained by the Chinatown churches knew Yut Gar's name on their subscription list. South of Sacramento Street in Chinatown where the stores are run by Japanese and where the tourists purchase the junk of Japan instead of the solid values of China Yut Gar was represented in the councils of control when the annual surplus and profits were distributed. Without having evidence acceptable to the courts of the United States the federal inspectors who combed each ship from the Orient knew full well that now and then the cached opium which they found in the tanks and the bunkers of the incoming ships had been paid for with drafts remitted by Yut Gar and a half dozen men associated with him in the opium ring.

The income tax men and one of the San Francisco banks learned that Yut Gar owned a downtown hotel, a ramshackle apartment house out toward the Presidio which was rented to Japanese families and that a pool room much frequented by the young men of Chinatown paid its monthly tribute to the cashier at the fish merchant's store.

A rat has fleas and a rat can be caught but the fleas escape, and thus with Yut Gar. He maintained his

membership in a dozen business tongs and in the Chinese Chamber of Commerce but no more than once a year did he attend any of the councils wherein were gathered the head men of the colony. The impatience of age had settled upon Yut Gar and wherever his private affairs or personal interests demanded the elimination of any man who opposed him he accomplished his will through an agent of the Ling Yip Tong. The Ling Yip crew was a gun gang, and presently the 'undesirable would be dragged out of some black alley with his life sentence finally punctuated with a leaden period.

Yut Gar maintained his fish store for the sole reason that it gave the voyages and enterprises of his life some fixed point of departure and some safe port of return. Quite surely there was no sentiment of association which kept him throughout long days and nights hidden in the third back room with half a dozen old cronies as evil as himself. Perhaps with the habit of residence fixed upon him he avoided the inconveniences which forever attend a transfer of human habitation.

Yut Gar was not feared by Chinatown. He was accepted as one of the unpleasant things of life. A good many progressive Chinese disliked him and he was honestly hated by a dozen or so of the better men of the colony.

Bow Lung was one who undoubtedly hated Yut Gar. In the apothecary's hatred there was nothing malignant nor selfish, but Bow Lung was an educated gentleman who believed in work and in kindness. He found in his heart no excuse for the presence of Yut Gar and his kind on this earth nor any forgiveness for the evil thing which characterized each enterprise wherein Yut Gar played his part.

By some twist of fate the poet and the fish merchant had their first meeting in front of the establishment of the apothecary. Bow Lung lived his life deep in the shadows of his shelves beyond the ken of Chinatown and out of the vision of the tourists and sightseers whose feet led them through the sawdust and sand of the sidewalks of Dupont Street. From long years of approximate solitude wisdom had come to Bow Lung and he knew that no good could come to the man marked by Yut Gar's evil attention.

In the midnight fog through the windows of his apothecary shop Bow Lung witnessed the encounter between Yut Gar and the poet. He saw Yut Gar hobbling along on his twisted old legs down Dupont Street.

The poet, walking with the firmer step of youth overtook Yut Gar in front of the apothecary's store. Yut Gar, freighted with his conscience and appre-

hensive of the hour turned quickly to discover who might be following him. Although he had never spoken with the poet he knew him as he knew all of the ten thousand residents of the colony.

The apothecary saw Yut Gar reach out his hand and touch the poet's arm. Thereafter, until they faded into the drifting fog he saw the poet and the fish merchant walking together.

The apothecary turned to a shrine set against the wall of his store. From a blue vase he took a stick of incense. He lighted the incense and set it in a burner. To his lips came the words of a Buddhist prayer which is offered for men about to die.

Bow Lung, wise in the intrigue of Chinatown, knew that the touch of Yut Gar's hand upon the poet's arm marked him for misfortune.

Yut Gar conducted the poet along Dupont Street. The pair turned and walked up the inclined street from whence dived Ross Alley. Arrived at his store Yut Gar knocked twice on the panels of the second door of his establishment. The door opened, disclosing a dimly lighted stairway leading to a cellar underneath the fish merchant's store. Yut Gar and the poet descended the stairway.

An hour later the poet marched again into the night. He walked quickly across the narrow alley of his own doorway. Lumped awkwardly in the

right hand pocket of his black coat which was buttoned tightly about him was a bull-nosed .45 automatic.

His hunger and his poverty and the misery of his sister's life had converted Sing Fang to a new enterprise. He had passed his word and over the spurted blood of three white chickens he had whispered the complicated oath which made him a member of the Ling Yip Tong. In the left hand pocket of the black coat was a thousand dollars in currency. The money was a retaining fee paid to him by Yut Gar.

The life of an "active" member of the Ling Yips rarely exceeds twelve months. Their killers are a well paid lot. Yut Gar had suggested to the poet that the mask of his reputation would protect him in his work for many years, but the apothecary's prayer for the man about to die was more appropriate than Yut Gar's babbling optimism.

Thereafter for many days the poet's sister ate food of first quality and dressed in gentle fabrics.

On his table in his room above The Falling Tear Pawn Shop his brushes were abandoned. No longer from the brushes' silken ends flowed the liquid syllables of the classics. The brushes were caked with black ink but the ink was not so black as the new enterprise to which the poet had subscribed.

The first months of Sing Fang's affiliation with the

Ling Yip Tong were devoted to the business of learning his weapon. A gunman of the tongs is not born with the ability to create a three-bullet pattern six inches in diameter at a range of fifty yards. In police circles it is known that the Ling Yip killings are midnight affairs and midnight marksmanship means long weeks of practice boiled down to where accuracy becomes instinct. Neither do the Ling Yips shoot straight-armed. In twelve years San Francisco Chinatown has known a dozen Ling Yip killings. Their retaliatory measures are procured in the open, but under cover of night. Witnesses to five of their killings testified that the operative's hand was not extended and that he shot with his right arm close against his side.

In the second room of the cellar under Yut Gar's store Sing Fang spent long hours in practice with his weapon. Behind heavy barred doors through which no sound escaped and with a boy to reload the pistol clips as fast as he could fire them, the poet fired hundreds and thousands of cartridges. Now and then Yut Gar would inspect the results of his practice, but from the merchant's lips no compliment was spoken until a seven-shot pattern destroyed but a half inch disk of the pine target.

When Sing Fang was capable of superimposing seven copper-sheathed bullets, Yut Gar spoke his first word of approval. And then just as Sing Fang

was ready for the work before him the gods of evil intervened. A winging empty shell, twisting from the ejector hook of his .45 stripped a corner of the upper lid from the poet's right eye. For an hour he bore his pain in silence and then at the appointed time the door of the target room was opened.

The poet made his way to the street level and dived across the alley to his own door. On the table in his room his warm tea and his rice stood ready. With the slow clotting blood dripping from his upper eyelid he awakened his sister. With her gentle hands Sing Toy fixed soft bandages above the poet's injured eye and then into the night she made her way to Dupont Street, pausing in her flight before the doorway of the apothecary shop kept by Bow Lung.

The apothecary, roused from his sleep, looked from his window with the precaution born of long experience. Then quickly he opened his door to admit the poet's sister.

"Enter my house, Lustre of Moonlight."

Sing Toy spoke at once of her brother's wound. "Blood drips from his eye."

"The eyes of his soul were blinded by the touch of Yut Gar's hand. What was the manner of his injury?"

Sing Toy explained as best she could the cause of the accident. Bow Lung busied himself for a little

while with the powders and ointments in the bottles and jars about him and presently Sing Toy departed carrying with her half a dozen packages of healing herbs and dressings for the poet's eye. A less tangible but more absolute possession which had been given to the keeping of Sing Toy was the gift of love for the girl which had suddenly flamed in Bow Lung's heart.

In the poet's room Sing Toy set the new bandages upon her brother's wound, thinking meanwhile of the apothecary and the words which he had spoken. Presently she told her brother of her meeting with Bow Lung and then to Sing Fang out of the void of night there came a song and in the song he seemed to learn that all his sorry world was right.

At dawn he returned to his work in the composing room of the newspaper.

That night Yut Gar sent for him. Entering the fish merchant's establishment he was accosted by Yut Gar who conducted him to the third back room in the cellar beneath the store. There to Sing Fang's disgust the fish merchant told him of his love for Sing Toy.

"The gossip of the streets connects the name of your sister with that of the apothecary. Bow Lung is one of the high council of the Lee Ming Tong and the Lee Mings are blood enemies of the association to which you have sworn allegiance. Say to your

sister that she shall marry me and take upon yourself the obligation of destroying Bow Lung. This is my command."

Before the poet left him Yut Gar had imposed his demand and Sing Fang had consented to display on the panels of his door the red paper announcements which would precede the marriage of Sing Toy and Yut Gar.

The poet faced two alternatives. He could destroy Bow Lung and his sister's chance of happiness or by breaking his pledged word he could postpone for a little while the hour fixed for the apothecary's death.

For a moment self-destruction filled his mind. Yut Gar had threatened the poet's life as a result of his withholding his consent to Sing Toy's marriage, and Sing Fang realized that his arm was all that stood between his sister and a forced marriage with Yut Gar.

On the following day all Chinatown knew that the pearl of the colony would presently be crushed and broken in the crooked fingers of the fish merchant of Ross Alley.

Early in the afternoon when the shadow of the pagoda above Sing Fat's store painted its symbol of the dark legends of China over the portals of St. Mary's Church on the opposite side of Dupont Street, the poet left his dusty printing office. He

walked down Dupont Street until he came to the shop of the apothecary. He entered Bow Lung's shop and for a space of minutes this tool of the Ling Yip Tong conversed with the apothecary. The poet spoke brief sentences interspersed by long silences.

When the two men parted each man was smiling. The apothecary stood still for a little while after the poet's departure. Then he turned to the shrine above which blazed the vermilion tablets that bore his family name. In the shrine he lighted a stick of crimson incense and presently the pungent odours of his shop were invaded by the gentler perfume that lay in the curling smoke lifting from the glowing spark.

On his way down Dupont Street the poet paused for an instant near where the cigarette vendor sat in his wheeled chair gossiping with a garrulous old Chinese woman. The poet heard his sister's name spoken, and then the name of Yut Gar fell from the old woman's lips. When he approached the pair they were silent.

He made his way to his house and entered it. In her room at work on some last detail of her wedding garments he encountered his sister. Her slim shoulders were already bent under the weight of the fate which had been imposed upon her by the poet's oath to the Ling Yip Tong and his obligations to

Yut Gar. Something in her attitude struck with terrific force at the core of Sing Fang's heart. Without speaking to her he returned to his own room where from the false bottom of a bamboo basket he retrieved the weapon of his sinister profession. He walked rapidly down the creaking staircase to the street below and dived across the alley into the fish merchant's store. He sought Yut Gar in the third back room below the street but Yut Gar was not there. He waited eight hours for the return of the man and then, disappointed he journeyed out upon the dark streets of Chinatown.

He mingled with the thread of pedestrians drifting toward the attraction of the night time lottery whose drawing was held at the midnight hour. On Dupont Street, before the apothecary shop, some instinct halted him. He turned and knocked at the door of Bow Lung's shop.

The apothecary appeared presently and opened the door. The poet entered the store. After the door had closed Sing Fang, the poet, turned squarely and faced Bow Lung.

"By Yut Gar and the council of the Ling Yip Tong I have been bound by my oath and now it is ordered that I destroy you."

Bow Lung hesitated for a moment in his reply. "When does the happy event take place?" he finally asked.

"Before the day on which my sister weds Yut Gar," the poet replied. He turned toward the door. "The hardest steel has known the hottest fires. Sing Toy loves you—and love is stronger than the Ling Yip Tong—or death."

The poet walked into the night. He made his way directly to Yut Gar's cellar. Yut Gar had returned.

"Enter this room with me," the poet said. He led Yut Gar into the target room.

The poet closed the heavy doors against the night. He drew the bull-nosed .45 automatic from his pocket and levelled it at the pine target at the end of the room. The gases of seven cartridges filled the heavy air. He removed the cartridge clip from the pistol and inserted another one. He walked to the far end of the room where he stood for a moment looking at the target whose surface was punctured with but a single hole.

"That which I lost, Yut Gar, has been returned to me." The muscles of the poet's arm lay tense against his side. From the flaming throat of the automatic crashed a series of explosions.

For three seconds after the roar of the explosions had died Yut Gar lived. Then his head drooped. On the breast of his blouse was a pattern of seven holes outlining the classic Wenli ideograph which means everlasting life.

Sing Fang returned to his house. He tore from its place on the door the flaring crimson ribbon on which was printed Yut Gar's name.

He entered his room and walked to the table whereon lay his brushes and his inks. He moistened a little stone slab and from a jet black stick of ink he ground enough to fill one of his brushes. On a strip of crimson paper he inscribed the apothecary's name. He pasted this paper upon the door beside the strip which bore the name of his sister. He returned to his room and presently he was asleep.

At dawn he awakened his sister. "Yut Gar is dead, but a marriage must never be postponed. The name of Bow Lung is beside yours upon the door of my house. I would have your wedding accomplished before night falls. . . . After to-night I may be . . . away."

YELLOW DAWN

YELLOW DAWN

I

AT twilight the exiled Chinese Emperor stood by the third window in the west wall of the Island Palace in Peking. Two thousand feet east of him under the yellow tiles of the royal music room on Singing Swan Island the Dictator's agent searched in the fields of his girdle and found a Michigan match whose phosphorous content was forbidden by the Federal statutes of the United States. The little Cobra moistened the match with his tongue. He rubbed the match head on the front sight of a Manlicher-Mauser and five seconds later the barrel of the rifle levelled from beneath the eaves of the music room. From its throat into the half-light of evening coughed the incandescent gases of an explosion which kicked a three-hundred grain bullet straight for the belly of the Emperor.

"Come, my lord, until I charm thine ears with the sweet syllables of the Lotus Song." Thus spoke the Emperor's favourite and the Emperor obeyed.

Echoing upon her words across the waters came the slap of the rifle.

By this narrow chance the Emperor lived but the lips of the girl beside him went grey and the film of her eyes was death. The Emperor carried her

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to a couch against the dark wall of the room. With the white knuckles of his trembling left hand he struck a jade bell hanging beside the couch.

"The summons from the celestial envoy was misdirected," he said to a servant who appeared. "Life still resides with me, but for this girl—" his head dropped with a gesture of despair—"but for this girl let the priests prepare the ceremony of the final ascending on the Dragon."

II

Until midnight the Cobra lay quiet under the yellow tiles of the roof and then he made his way to the straight street that led from the Summer Palace. At dawn he lay in the shadows of the outer gate tower. He spent the day in the furrowed dust with the dogs and beggars that thronged the gate. At midnight he voyaged the highway leading to the Chihli Gulf.

A month later midway of the Garden Bridge that crosses Soo Chow Creek in Shanghai he encountered a barber in whose coiled queue was braided a single strand of yellow silk.

"Summer suns reveal corpses buried in the snow," he said to the barber.

The barber looked at him. "A clever man understands a nod," he replied.

"Where, then, is a little finger of the right hand of the splendour of the South?" asked the Cobra.

"At the third house from the bazaar where horses are sold, beside the Thibet Road, is The Tiger."

The pair parted. At midnight the Cobra reported to The Tiger. "One shot well aimed, impelled by the power of justice,—this deed I accomplished. The Emperor is many days dead."

A great hulk of a man in a plain blouse of faded blue, deep in the shadows against the wall spoke a rattling, guttural reply. "A liar is always positive. Until yesterday the Emperor lived. You failed. A cup of poison administered by the Illustrious Premier himself accomplished the Emperor's death. You would do well to destroy yourself before your failure marks you for torture."

The Cobra shrivelled at the words of the man before him. When his accuser had finished he bowed low. The Cobra walked slowly toward a point where the Maloo Bridge spans the creek that flows along the Thibet Road. For a single instant he hesitated and then in surrender he flopped awkwardly into the yellow currents below him. A mile downstream his limp body hung throughout the night against a stone pier of the Chefoo Bridge. His face was beneath the surface.

III

Mongul and Ming and Manchu, with forty other races of China, seethed in the depths of the yellow mire and boiled for a while in the racial volcanoes. From out the mass of humanity were spawned the rich men, the poor men, the beggar men and the thieves of China.

Ching counted copper cash for a ginger merchant in Canton. There were ninety-six cash in the Canton string of a hundred and for some years Ching's one ambition was to move to some Manchu City of the North where strings of sixty cash passed for a hundred. When Ching was twenty years old he spoke of his ambition to his employer.

"You will do well enough," the ginger merchant said, "to attend to your work. In another ten years perhaps we will discuss a change in the program of your life."

And then one day an absent minded Boston missionary left a roll of translations in the ginger shop and in Cantonese characters Ching read that now was the time for all good men to come to the aid of the party. He read another sentence in which a man said, "Give me liberty or give me death." In another a man named Stephen Decatur hoped that his country might always be right, promising however to stick for the rough stuff, right or wrong.

Ching handed the folded manuscript to the pork-eating Cantonese ginger merchant. "What is this talk?" he asked.

The proprietor of the shop looked at the manuscript. "Any thought can be expressed in Cantonese dialect," he read.

"The foreigner is learning our language," he explained to Ching.

The young man speculated upon the declaration that now was the time for all good men to come to the aid of the party. "Perhaps it is a birthday party; fighting ruffians from an adjoining village," he reflected. His mind was occupied with this thought for several weeks.

He again sought advice from his employer. "What is meant by 'party'?"

The Cantonese who was wise in his generation explained that in America there were two great political groups, both of which paraded under the faded banners of patriotism. "It is the same in China, except that we do not wear the mask of hypocrisy. Here an official openly delights in his appointment because of the wealth he can squeeze from his district."

Ching said no more but for many months his mind was a fertile field in which developed a philosophy which he came to believe was the reform solution which should overcome the selfish motives

that inspired every Chinese official he had known.

"A dead thief is a good watchman," he declared to himself. "A thief deserves death. A political thief deserves death at the hands of the State and as an agent of the State any of its citizens may act."

Without knowing it Ching had become a radical and a reformer.

IV

In Canton at midnight from a thousand houses and shops and factories there assembled the local members of the Tung Men Hui. To this society of sworn brothers Ching had been admitted the previous year and within the society his level judgment and his acid tongue had gained for him a high place in the inner councils of this corrective clan of young Chinese.

This night a courier from the Manchu North addressed the meeting. "The body of our nation, the soul of China herself, has been traded to the Island monkeys for a sum of gold. Japan in January gave to the President a document whose demands are the bludgeon of a great brigand, the hands of a skilful thief and the short knife of the impatient assassin. These demands, almost without exception have been granted. That the Presi-

dent's shoulders itch for the mantle of empire even as his yellow hands itch for minted gold is common knowledge in the North. The death of the little exiled Emperor was but a detail of this traitor's plan." The speaker paused.

Ching reacted instantly to the announcement. To his mind came a picture of the miserable millions that peopled the country of his birth. "It would be well to destroy this man," he remarked calmly to a member beside him. "It is the life of this greedy beast or the life of our China. This President and the Japanese accomplice to China's dishonour must be destroyed. That is a man's work. 'Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the party.' That is a sentence of empty words much used in the land of the free. I bid you good night. If failure marks my work may the mantle of worthy effort fall on a more successful brother of the Tung Men Hui."

Bent upon the great mission of his life without further ceremony Ching of Young China ducked into the night and flapped his way along dark twisted streets until he came to the apothecary shop of Moy Gow.

Back of a teakwood counter on which burned a single thin candle Moy Gow sat blinking through his iron spectacles.

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"Fat to the bones," the boy offered in greeting.

"The same to you, and long life to the fat," Moy Gow cackled in return.

"A married man stands with his feet in two boats."

"With marriage trouble begins," agreed Moy Gow.

The boy proceeded more directly to the business of the moment. "In the Yangtze gorges grows a plant on which blossoms the blue flower of Heaven. The root of this plant tapers like the starry-towered pagoda. Its heart is a seven-rayed star."

"How many wives have you?" Moy Gow interrupted.

The boy hesitated. He had no wives, but for his purpose a lie fell easily from his tongue. "I have but one wife," he finally replied. "There are three other women however—"

"The dimensions of your necessity are as sharp in my mind as the moon against the midnight sky." From the folds of his blouse Moy Gow produced a two-pronged brass key. With this he unlocked the fastenings of an ebony box which lay concealed beneath a black felt hat upon a shelf beside him. The box was half filled with a fine grey powder. "Three pinches of this dust—one for each of the undesirables—and there will be but one woman to worry you. Have you a safe receptacle for it?"

The boy extended a little silver bottle whose contents were retained by a tight fitting metal cap. "This will carry the key to the prison room which my problems have become."

"Even so." With an ivory spatula Moy Gow transferred three little cones of the grey powder to the silver bottle. "This will cost you a hundred times its weight in the dust of fine pink pearls."

The boy paid for his purchase with six pieces of English Gold. "It is worth a million times its weight in the dust of sapphire stars," he returned. "Long life to you and a tranquil grave at which shall gather your hundred sons."

He left the shop of Moy Gow and on the next day with the little silver bottle hung safely about his neck on a heavy silk cord he journeyed to Hong Kong. A week later he embarked on a north-bound steamer. While the first almond blossoms twinkled white in the cold mornings of the North he disembarked. He resumed his journey, joining a marching mob of merchants and beggars which thronged the road leading to the capital.

On a morning when the yellow mist lay low on the yellow walls of the Tarter City Ching entered it through the Central Southern gate.

He established himself in the shop of a joss carver. Each day for a week he journeyed forth from his new residence, diligently to seek employ-

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ment in the inner walls of the Forbidden City. His admission was finally accomplished by the simple expedient of trading places with a soldier of the Imperial Army who longed for the freedom of the Southern Provinces.

"We are not paid," said this soldier guard of the Hou Min Gate, "but there is food, and that is something."

"Yes, that is something," the boy agreed. "Could all the people of the Empire have food in plenty, that would be six hundred million somethings for China."

Next day the boy presumed to speak with his commanding officer. "As a soldier," he said, "I am a number two man, but as a cook, few can excel me under the blue bowl of heaven."

On the following day he took his place before the six chow kettles of the company to which he was attached. Three days later by a transfer whose informality was prompted by the mutual desires of two insignificant units of the great organization he found himself in the palace kitchens.

Secure about his neck upon its silken cord hung the silver bottle containing the lethal grey dust of the blue flowers from the gorges of the Yangtze.

On the sixth day of May along with his light lunch of chicken meat and broiled pork and his

mushrooms and bamboo sprouts, his melons and roasted duck, the Tiger was served with a bit of news to the effect that a solid Western province was a seething cauldron of revolt. To relieve an apoplectic rage marked by the purpling veins that stressed with the insane blood of his heart, Tiger seized his sword and with three savage strokes butchered his favourite wife and the child she carried in her arms.

"That man is a king of hell," the boy Ching said in Chinese to the panic-stricken serving boy who brought the news of the tragedy to the palace kitchens. "The next time he is enraged the edge of his sword will probably taste your blood if you are near him."

For half a day the servant moaned in his horror until the boy again spoke to him. "Give me your blouse and your cap. Should the maniac sword of empire introduce me to the dominion of death it will make no difference. I will take your place in the arch of disaster."

The costumes of service were exchanged and with the transfer, to the boy came opportunity. Upon one of the supper trays for the Tiger, beside a yellow platter lay a little white cup of salt. On the platter were six slices of fat pork which had been boiled in milk.

The boy reached for the silver bottle that hung

from the silken cord about his neck. He mixed half of the powder with the salt. "A pinch for the Four Power Loan," he said. "A pinch for the Twenty-one Demands, a pinch for the wife you murdered and a last one for the Empire that you would destroy." He mixed the grey powder carefully with the salt. In the white cup it showed faintly grey against the pure porcelain.

Into the great feasting room of the palace he carried this detail of the Tiger's menu. He gave it into the hands of a servant. A moment later the boy withdrew from the room. He paused at the teakwood portals of the doorway. The yellow porcelain vault of the roof spoke to him of the light above and in the black tiles of the floor he read a message of darkness under earth.

The Tiger seasoned the fat pork with the grey salt. He ate with the haste of a beast.

Ching walked rapidly to the palace kitchen, sensing the exultation born of the knowledge of success.

On that sixth day of June Death invaded the palace and the Illustrious One surrendered to superior force. Presently the flames of the palace candles pulsed in cadence with the message of the royal mourning drums.

Some days later, following a great vermilion

coffin Ching made one of the thousand marching men whose exit from the Imperial City was marked by the mourning drums which tumbled within its crumbling walls.

"The work of the day is done," Ching said to himself, "and in the silver bottle there remains a second slash from the swinging sword of Justice."

He looked steadily at the great coffin carried by the marching men before him. "Too much fat pork, too much grey salt. You are not so damned illustrious, now that death has loosened your fingers from the throat of my beloved China. Now you are but a dead beast and I can forget you. I have other work that must be done."

V

Ching sailed from the Chihli Gulf on a coasting steamer down the Yellow Sea, landing two weeks later at Yokohama. He paid his thirty-four cent fare for a Tokyo ticket and boarded an electric car. Fifty minutes later under the cherry trees in Ueno Park he realized that the success of his enterprise might demand the expenditure of substantial sums of money. He had with him less than fifty silver dollars. "The telegraphs are censored," he reflected, "and I can summon no aid from

the outside. Tonight, therefore, I shall play fan-tan, knowing that in my need the gods of chance will not desert me."

From the park he walked to the shores of the curving moat that lay about the Imperial Palace. For a little while he gazed across the placid waters of the moat at the heavy stone blocks beneath the southeast watch tower. "Pretty soon, grey stones, you and the fabric of the Imperial Palace and the child of the Sun Goddess will each disintegrate—and Empire shall return to the dust of its origin."

His reverie was interrupted by the abrupt arrival of an officer of the Japanese police. "Your name?" the officer demanded.

Ching's fumbling tongue hesitated for an instant in reply. The interrogation was followed by a long examination.

"If you are a soldier and a Manchu banner man as you claim to be, what are you doing in Tokyo?" the officer questioned. "You are under arrest." He slipped the noose of a pliant fibre rope about Ching's neck and led him ignominiously down the street.

That night Ching knew the inside of a Japanese jail. Within this jail for more than a month he languished until he discovered a guard whose sense of duty and whose greed succumbed to fifty silver dollars and the promise of a larger bribe. Ching

lied eloquently. "In San Francisco on the Western Continent I am a merchant of good repute. Arrange my release and from San Francisco a thousand silver dollars shall be sent to you."

In the heat of an August night Ching marched from the Tokyo jail wearing a police uniform which his jailer had provided. Before dawn he had become an insignificant unit in the crew of the *Korea Maru*. This rolling tub of the Toyo Kisen Kaisha cleared on the following day for San Francisco.

Three weeks later the ship docked at Pier 34 on the Embarcadero and with half a hundred Japanese coolies Ching got his bonded shore leave. Thirty of the Japanese coolies made the usual jump for the Santa Clara Valley, later to become international immigration problems, but Ching sought sanctuary with his countrymen in the colony on Grant Avenue. Here for a while he lived in quiet, building his plans for the consummation of the second great endeavour of his life.

In Tokyo meanwhile the mangling wheels of government seized upon the facts of Ching's escape from jail. Rapidly and in detail the data concerning this insignificant unit of the Chinese Empire accumulated in the archives at Tokyo police headquarters. A system which has combined the ingenuity of French methods with the thoroughness of the German order operates at Tokyo and with this

dual technique is incorporated the cunning which has distilled from the brains of a myriad little brown people since the days of their Malay origin. Small wonder, then, that in the police files were recorded things so insignificant concerning Ching that he himself had long ago forgotten them.

From this composite record of his life two facts condemned him. He had been one of three members of the Tung Men Hui in Peking at the time of the death of the Illustrious One, and he had escaped from a Japanese jail.

Tokyo takes no chances. Broadcast from Imperial Headquarters issued an order to get this Ching and to get him good. To the police agents in San Francisco, along with a hundred other explicit commands came finally a copy of a document whose approximate translation was, in the simplicity of final effect, a death warrant for this patriot Brother Tong of Young China.

At the time that this order was being filed in its appropriate place in the drawer of a great black desk in a room on the third floor of a ramshackle tenement in Ross Alley, Ching suffered another collision with experience which for a while bade fair to swing him from the ordered methods of his high purpose. In a bamboo cage on the window sill across the air shaft from Ching's room a little grey bird sang his thankfulness for the bit of lettuce leaf which had been

given him by a hand so slim and fair that Ching's heart leaped when his vision first reacted at the sight of it.

For a week, almost without pause, Ching maintained his vigil at his window and then he was rewarded by a smile and a glance from the eyes of a Chinese girl. Reflected in the liquid ebony of her glance Ching saw a picture of the paradise which lies beyond the sapphire bowl in whose translucent crystal whirls this mad, unhappy world.

"In her deep eyes is all the Heaven one man needs!" Forgotten were his fine ideals, the high ambition of his life, and for the time this victorious swimmer in reform's uneasy sea lay weak and drowned in the glance of a girl of China.

"Maid, mistress or widow she shall be my wife!" Ching declared to himself, and on that instant action was born of purpose.

Within a week of that day a reciprocal message came to him in answer to the marriage proposal which had accompanied the third gift which Ching had sent the girl in practical expression of his love.

"Thine evermore, my lord, until the stars of night are dust,—until the myriad suns are cold."

With conquest there returned the awful purpose of his life, "Until this final obligation to the great empire of my birth can be discharged, life and my home and all that love can mean are naught. First

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I must do my work." Thus rudely he awakened the dreaming, happy girl.

She answered him. "Your words are the laws of my life. The ambitions of your heart govern each single hour of time."

That night Ching journeyed forth into the San Francisco colony of his people. From the half opened doors that gave upon a little balcony overhanging the pawnshop of the Falling Tear Society a short gun barked twice at Ching. Except for a splash of lead on the cobblestone paving of Sacramento street Ching had no means of knowing that he was the object of the attack. Unharmcd he mingled quickly with a dozen of his countrymen walking in his direction.

"That will be some Buddha loving Manchu of China,—or else some little brown monkey obeying his orders from Tokyo," he reflected. "At any rate I will get out of range."

He turned on Stockton street and walked directly to his residence. He sought the Chinese girl.

"My life was the blackness of night until dawn came with the radiance of your presence. Now in the early morning of our happiness my day is darkened by the blue clouds of ancient tragedy."

He spoke of himself. He told the girl of the accomplishment of his plans in China and of his re-

solve to be the instrument that would cut the cord which bound the dynasty of the Sun Goddess to the Empire of Japan. "The Mikado must be destroyed. I am known to the agents of the brown monkeys throughout each city of every continent. The final act can best be played by you alone."

From a wide belt about his waist he produced a thin package of yellow banknotes. "Here is much money. You are the most beautiful woman I have known. In Tokyo your beauty will be a key that will unlock the doors of the Imperial Palace."

He reached for the little silver bottle that hung on its silken string about his neck. He handed the bottle to the girl. "Grey dust of the blue flower of the Yangtze gorges is in this bottle," he said, "and the grey dust is death . . . death for dog or for the ruler of an empire. The barrier of circumstances divorces us on earth, but I shall find you in the far country . . . the fair wide country up beyond the stars."

The moment of their parting came. Ching made his way into the desolate night and forty minutes later he was on the far side of San Francisco bay.

In Oakland he boarded a train. At eleven o'clock that night he settled himself into the safety of a Pullman berth in a car that was bound for Portland.

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At Portland, still intent upon flight he lingered around Union Station for an hour and then boarded a train which took him up the Columbia River.

For three months he lay in hiding in the malodorous establishment of Yee Chong at The Dalles until one day to Wing Lung's store next door there came a prying Japanese.

Word of this brown man's presence was brought to Ching. "What is his business?" Ching asked.

"He searches for land on which fruit may be raised. He professes to be a farmer."

"His hands?"

"His hands are soft."

"He is no farmer then."

Realization that pursuit and discovery would forever be incorporated in the program of his life came finally to Ching. "Boldly to face these brown monkeys in one last effort at accomplishment,—that is a man's game and that is the game I play. The girl has failed, for she has been in Tokyo these many weeks and there has come no signal word of her success. By the aid of the gods my feet shall again know the streets of Japan and there in the capital I shall destroy my prey or greet the master of failure whose name is Death. And if I fail then it will mean naught save that the bond of my obligation is dissolved. I have lived for China and for China I can die. It is better that I should read life's last

chapter through the smoke of conflict than in the heavy fogs of some black hiding kennel such as this."

He returned to San Francisco. On the ferry, crossing from Oakland he was accosted by a stranger whose straight black hair, close cropped, spoke only too plainly of the country of his birth.

"Your name is Ching," the stranger said. "You are from Canton. For a while you were a banner man in the Palace at Peking and then you went to Tokyo where you suffered arrest. Leaving Tokyo you came to San Francisco but for a while you have been hiding in seclusion in The Dalles in the State of Oregon. I tell you this so that you may know how famous a personage you are. Famous indeed! So famous that in your honour a banquet will be served in the halls of the Japanese Amicable Feasting Club tonight at half past nine. This banquet,—"

"I do not understand much of the rattling, rotten, shrieking tongue of the Japanese," Ching interrupted. He turned his shoulder.

Only the hissing, indrawn breath and the hypocritical smile which widened on the Jap's countenance preceded a repetition of the brown man's words.

"I speak the Cantonese dialect also," the Jap continued. "This banquet," he resumed, "is a feast in the honour of Ching, Cantonese, Manchu Banner man, patriot brother of the Tung Men Hui.

To save yourself the annoyance of being killed on the street you would do well to be at the banquet hall at half past nine tonight." The Jap's eyes narrowed in their sinister promise.

For five seconds Ching looked at him. "I will be there, little brown monkey," he said. "Now depart from me before I cast you into the waters of the Bay."

The Jap smiled. "I thank you for your honourable acceptance." He bowed low and the hiss of his indrawn breath sounded to Ching like the whine of a winging knife.

"When the strands of the web of circumstance cannot be broken by brute strength they may sometimes be cut with the blade of genius," Ching reflected. "I will attend their banquet. For me it will be a feast of death. But death means sleep and now that the girl of China is destroyed I am tired."

VI

In San Francisco Ching's feet led him to a joss house on Grant Avenue. He mounted two flights of rickety stairs and presently into the night there clanked a dozen broken notes from a Buddhist bell, followed by the hollow rattling of a wooden carp. In an incense burner, before the squinting Buddha,

Ching burned a million dollars' worth of spurious joss money. He gave the attending priest a dime and presently a dozen electrically driven prayer wheels were whirring intimate supplications to a Buddhist heaven.

"Here is a little silver carp whose big brother swims in the Lotus Pond of Paradise. For fifty cents this carp will bring long life." The Buddhist priest dangled the tempting talisman before Ching's eyes.

"Here is the fifty cents. That is cheap enough for long life. I think you are a liar."

The Buddhist priest made no reply. For fifty cents he could afford to be a liar.

Ching descended from the joss house. "If a ticket to heaven is good, two tickets are twice as good. I will speak with the Christian priest." He lingered for a little while on the steps of the white man's church and then, impelled by his dull ambition for spiritual safety he entered the residence of the Christian Joss.

To a priest near the altar Ching addressed himself. "My feet are weary," he said. "The stones in life's roadway are sharp."

"The shoes of sacrifice protect the pilgrim's feet," the priest returned in Chinese. "Worthy ambition is accomplished with prayer."

"Prayer?"

"Ask and ye shall receive. No good thing will be withheld."

"In silence?"

"In silence."

For a little while Ching's brain fumbled with an inarticulate ambition and then expression came to him. "Joss of the American heavens," he prayed, "let the death of the Emperor of the little brown monkeys crown with success my work for my China. For the people of the vast empire of my birth let the grey dust of the blue flowers of the Yangtze hills divorce the man of Tokyo from life."

In a brown wood box near the door Ching placed a silver fifty cent piece. He took a quarter in change. The little silver carp of Buddha was well worth fifty cents, but for the intangible joss a quarter seemed quite enough.

The priest stood near the door. "Ask and ye shall receive," he said. "The prayers of faith will be answered."

"How soon?" Ching inquired in farewell.

"At the appointed time," the priest replied.

Ching left the church and walked rapidly down Grant Avenue. Returning to his room he carried with him a little blue bowl in which grew a budding willow. For half an hour he was employed in the gentle work of arranging a shrine before which he again voiced the ambition of his heart.

"For the sake of the sleeping millions of my China let the bracelet of success clasp the wrist of the woman I love. If she has failed let my unworthy hand become the righteous instrument that shall avenge my people's ancient wrongs."

The grey bird in its bamboo cage on the window sill across the light well answered him. He listened for a moment to the bird's song and turned from the shrine he had made. He stood erect and lifted his head. "No matter how black the forest, how rough its winding course, each wandering river finds at last its tranquil sea."

He walked to the window of his room which opened upon Sacramento Street. "Now I shall prepare myself for this last banquet." With an instinct of precaution born of his long troubled days he raised his hand to lower the shade before the lights within the room came to dispel the shadows of the night. He looked out across the street. To the litter of red paper bulletins on the dead wall of a building before him a six foot Chinaman of the north was adding another poster whose black characters, in the white glare of the street lights, stood out sharply against a background of Imperial yellow.

When the poster was in place Ching's eyes narrowed as they raced up the columns of the announcement spread before him. He read it for the

third time. His lips thinned over the teeth of his clenched jaws.

"Hai!" he exulted. "Accomplishment! She has won! The Great One is not now so great! Now I shall attend the banqueting room where the little brown assassins await me,—and I shall make the final winning play in their game of Death."

On the way to the banqueting hall where the Japanese Amicable Feasting Club was gathered he bought the night edition of a Chinese newspaper. He glanced at its front page, then folded it carefully and placed it in his pocket.

Three minutes later, exactly at half past nine the doors of the banquet hall swung wide before him. He faced an assemblage of a hundred men.

Inspired by the respect for the fate which awaited their guest, every member of the company stood up and bowed low to the Chinaman who faced them.

Ching smiled but did not bow. "It is not proper that a man should make a kowtow to a group of monkeys."

A pair of hissing little brown men, immaculate in evening dress conducted him to his chair while the company was yet standing. Without ceremony Ching seated himself.

Behind locked doors the feasting lasted for more than two hours. At midnight the little man at

Ching's left rose to his feet and at his gesture silence fell upon the company.

"We are men of the islands of the East," he began abruptly. "Our modes of speech, our manners and our thoughts are fixed by centuries of tradition. In spite of this, for the moment I shall borrow a characteristic from the republic of our temporary residence and frankness shall mark my words.

"Our guest, Ching, the illustrious son of our great world neighbour, is going on a long journey. From his destination there is no returning. We will drink to his lone awakening in the fair morning of his distant tomorrow." The speaker raised his glass.

Ching was silent for a moment. He looked intently at the clouded wine in the glass before him. He raised the glass and held it to the light. He knew full well that death lay heavy in his wine, but still no tremor marked his lifted hand. Without drinking he replaced the glass upon the cloth before him, claiming an unprotested moment for his words before the instant of death might come to him.

He rose to his feet. "I have to thank you for this interesting evening," he said. "I have found that your courtesy is exceeded only by the technique of your hypocrisy, but this I can forgive, knowing that the customs and traditions of the centuries behind you cannot easily be masked by the spurious

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compliments of monkeys whose mouths are larger than their hearts.

"I have dreamed a dream for the welfare of my China and with my dreaming I have known that the arm of action must accomplish the formulæ of reform. Religion and politics and revolution have torn the unhappy people of my country and to the wounds sustained by that vast empire has been added the destroying salt of your intrigue.

"I have believed that the people of a nation are greater than its ruler. In the first application of this faith I faced a locked impassable Manchu gate. This gate was finally opened with a key of blood.

"The little people of your own country know the spikes of the mad military reign and the hollow imperialism of a ruler whose person you hold sacred. It will surprise you to learn that this sacred one has been led through the Narrow Gate that opens unto common mortal men. The key that I used to unlock the Manchu shackles threw wide the door of death before this human animal on whose shoulders you have placed the sacred robes of empire. He is dead."

Ching reached for the folded newspaper in his pocket. He handed it to the man beside him. "Can you read Chinese?" he asked.

The chairman of the Japanese Amicable Feasting Society answered him. "I can read Chinese."

"Read this to these people then," Ching commanded. His pointing finger indicated a dispatch which flared on the open page of the newspaper.

The chairman's eyes followed Ching's direction. The little brown man struggled for a moment with an interpretation of the words of the announcement. Then he collapsed and fell with his arms extended upon the table. His outflung hand struck full against the glass of clouded wine and a dark red stain widened in the weave of the white cloth.

Ching smiled and reached for the newspaper. "Perhaps I would better translate this," he said. He raised his hand and into the resulting silence fell the syllables of his triumph.

"A dispatch dated the twenty-fourth of May," he began. "At 9:24 A.M., Tokyo time, His Imperial Majesty suffered a physical and mental collapse. Death resulted seven hours later. Plans for establishing a regency have been rejected. A republic is established."

In the tumult which followed Ching alone stood calm. Once instinctively his fingers reached for the glass of wine which lay spilled on the table before him. He looked at the widening stain, reading in the malignant scarlet the message of his release from the fate he had faced.

His thoughts were with the girl of China. He whispered his vows and the creed of his faith.

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"Some other manner of rendezvous will accomplish. Life within the walls of earth is naught without you."

It was then that he saw that unto the last man of his audience there had come a turning of the purpose which had inspired the meeting. Silence suddenly lay over them and then the tense hushed sentences of their new freedom from the long line of clutching kings filled the great room with a deep song of free men.

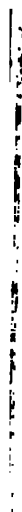
"A republic!" To each man came a vision of the wide fields of life apart from the ancient domain of kings. "A republic! A country where rest shall reward the worker and where the myriad little people of their race might know the fruits of industry and peaceful days, untroubled by the drums of war and the tense hours of mad revolt."

Again with the surge of reacting happiness the room was silent and then there sounded a gentle knock upon the panels of the door. In all the company Ching alone was at that moment master of himself. He walked to the door and opened it. Before him stood the girl of China.

"My work is done," she said. "I have come back to you."

He took her hand and together they walked from the banquet room. No man protested their departure nor lifted his hand to bar their way.

THE RELEASE



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I

AFTER the white man gave him life Chang Hong endured long hateful years at Van Hoog's side, trying to turn the malignant edge of abuse with the passive shield of perpetual gratitude.

Today the Chink's gods smile their quiet sympathy when he recites the tortures which his creed imposed. Meanwhile, from some inferno west of death the white man's eyes, seeing more clearly now, review the balanced ledgers of his life.

II

Rott Van Hoog left San Francisco after the sight had been burned from his eyes by a splash of the acid of retribution. Chang Hong who had been the manager of Van Hoog's San Francisco office accompanied the blind man to various cities in Europe wherein Van Hoog submitted to the clicking instruments of a dozen surgeons. When the surgeons had finally failed to ignite the flame of light in his scarred eyes Van Hoog began a hopeless retreat to his desolate sugar plantation in Java.

Bound for the Dutch East Indies, the pair sailed from Antwerp on the *Tegal*, an 8,000 ton tramp which belonged to Van Hoog. The ship had rusted out of a Lloyd's rating into a bargain where she swung in the salt of Yokohama harbour and she had paid for herself with her second cargo of sugar from Java to San Francisco. Her hull was as grey as Van Hoog's face but her grey plates were streaked with heavy red rust and the rust matched the livid scars in Van Hoog's eyes.

At Batavia, needing more intimate guidance in his black world Van Hoog bought a great mastiff and thereafter this dog, Vulf, marched ahead of the shuffling blind man, straining at the steel chain which was the tangible mark of his bondage. When Vulf came to know the man he led down the slow pathway of the dragging days the pupils of the dog's eyes came to be black islands in a sea of red hate.

There followed a year of life on the plantation south of Surabaya during which neither Chang Hong nor Vulf was away from the range of Van Hoog's voice.

Before the year was ended the white men of the island no longer tolerated the blind man in their establishments and except for the native servants Van Hoog knew no other companions save the Chinaman and the dog.

This, blotched with long voids of silence, was the present pool of life wherein floundered Van Hoog, seeing as best he could with his Chinese eyes and walking unsteadily with his mastiff feet.

On a night when the white moon slushed the fields with its liquid light Chang Hong sat in the shadow of a pillar which lifted from the veranda of Van Hoog's bungalow. At his side lay the mastiff. The moon traversed the night sky and presently its light ranged the contours of the dog's head and fell upon his eyes. The dog whined in his sleep. "Vulf, be still!" The Chinaman spoke the sharp sentence in English. Then about the pair fell the unearthly cover of dead silence which endured until earth awakened to Chang Hong's ears in the exquisite noises of the myriad insects abroad in the moonlight.

Apart from the house against the margin of cane, from the hundred huts wherein slept the natives who worked the vast acres of the sugar plantation, lifted an occasional plaintive cry where some sleeper translated the visions of his dreaming.

Fronting the house was a curving white road which twisted like a great serpent into the fastness of the cane. The road was marked at its distant end by two sentinel palms whose fanned branches lay against the night sky as steady as the stars.

Somewhere within the house a clock struck mid-

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night. When the first note of the hour sounded its silver against the silence the dog opened his eyes. Chang Hong sat motionless.

The next four notes of the bell were drowned in a woman's shriek which pierced through the substance of the house. The hairs on the mastiff's neck bristled. He raised his head.

Again the pregnant quiet was as tense as the dread instant that precedes the fury of a striking typhoon.

Chang Hong sought some tangible relief from the horror of the moment. He reached out his hand and touched the mastiff's head.

Then the veil of stillness was cut by the sharp creaking of a door. Chang Hong got to his feet. He breathed heavily like an exhausted swimmer who feels the hard sand beneath his feet.

The front door of the house opened and into the flooding moonlight from the black well of the door appeared Van Hoog's distorted face. His right hand was stretched before him. With his left he held fast to the latch of the door.

His eyes were grey in the white night save where the red capillaries fouled the fringes of their open lids. He whispered harshly into the silence.

"Chang!"

"Sir, I am here."

Van Hoog stepped out upon the veranda. He walked unsteadily to the rail. Once his moist hands

opened convulsively and then his fingers sheathed their nails deeply into his flaccid palms. He explored a pocket of his coat with his right hand and retrieved three grey pellets. He put them in his mouth and gulped them down. In a moment he ceased trembling.

He spoke again to the Chinaman and now his voice was calm. "Where is Vulf?"

"Here, sir, beside me."

"Give me his chain."

The Chinaman walked over beside Van Hoog. He extended the end of the steel chain which was hooked to the swivel on the leather collar about the mastiff's neck. Van Hoog looped his wrist in the chain and dragged on it heavily as if to assure himself of the dog's presence. He raised his head until the moonlight fell full upon his face.

"It is moonlight. I feel the weight of the light. The moon is white—the rotten, leprous moon!"

He turned to Chang Hong. "In the little room there is a woman," he said, brokenly. He amended his statement. "There was a woman—before—I will walk to the palm trees. Arrange the room. These damned Dutch magistrates!"

Chang Hong bowed to Van Hoog's command. "As you have ordered, sir." He entered the doorway of the house. On the floor of the little room in the shadow beside a table whereon a thin yellow

flame burned from the cone of an opium lamp, lay a girl. The silk of her throat was marked with blue welts that had bloomed beneath the clutching talons of Van Hoog's fat hands. Without haste the Chinaman straightened the disordered room and then in the thin light of the lamp he picked up the girl's body. He went out of the house and walked to the doorway of one of the native huts. He laid the dead girl on the ground outside of the hut. He thrust his head through the doorway and spoke sharply into the darkness. A voice answered him and presently two Chinese men came out. The two men picked up the girl's body and carried it toward the jungle of cane.

Chang Hong returned to the front veranda of the big house.

Trailing at the end of the chain from the mastiff's neck Van Hoog walked toward him up the road from the sentinel palms. The blind man shuffled along with steps of doubt, not trusting the solid ground beneath his feet. His right hand which held the leading chain was extended before him. His left arm lay at his side but the fingers of his free hand clenched now in a spasmodic monotony. His head was high in the moonlight and his eyes were open. In the set of his round head, erect on his bowed shoulders was the incongruous suggestion of a tall man aping the posture of a hunchback.

Near the steps of the veranda Chang Hong spoke to Van Hoog. "The work is accomplished as you ordered, sir."

The Chinaman's low words startled the blind man. "Your voice strikes like a snake! Lock that room; I would have it forever locked. Tomorrow we will leave this hell of moonlight—tonight—today! The *Tegal* clears for San Francisco. We will sail with Captain Vleet. Then with half the world between me and all of this I can sleep without dreaming. Get some trunks on the ship. You will come with me."

"Sir—yes. And Vulf?"

"The dog? He is all the eyes I have. Some day you will turn from me. Then he alone will remain at my side. Vulf comes with me—always."

A light air drifting from the house blew to the mastiff's nostrils some hint of the tragedy on which the last curtain had fallen. The dog bared his fangs and turned toward his master.

Chang Hong whispered Vulf's name. Hearing his name it seemed that the dog's expression softened. He turned his great head toward Chang Hong and the red rage died in his eyes.

III

Before the crimson of dawn had faded into day Van Hoog with the mastiff beside him sat in the rear

seat of a springless wagon, drawn by a pair of shaggy ponies. Chang Hong rode with the driver. They journeyed for six hours and at eleven o'clock they went aboard the *Tegal* where, under the ship's cargo booms the last of the sugar was being loaded.

At noon Captain Vleet came aboard. At the ship's rail a sailor told him that the owner intended making the trip to San Francisco.

The heat had driven Van Hoog to cover and Captain Vleet found him stretched on a bunk in the master's stateroom. "We clear at two o'clock," Captain Vleet informed the owner. "Yokohama for coal, and then west to San Francisco according to your orders."

"How many days to Yokohama? And to San Francisco?"

"Ten days on the first leg; six days in port, and a month across, sir. With favourable luck, that is."

"See that the luck is favourable Captain," Van Hoog replied. "Two million American dollars are waiting in San Francisco to be traded for my sugar. Sugar is twenty-four cents! Never was such a price. Like kings we shall live, Vulf and me!"

At the mention of his name the mastiff beside Van Hoog lifted his head. In his eyes beneath a sentiment of indifference for the kingly life was the glow of a great ambition to be free of the steel chain that bound him to his master.

Captain Vleet left the owner and made a tour of his ship. He returned presently to announce that Van Hoog's stateroom was in order. "The Chinaman can berth below."

Van Hoog immediately countermanded this detail of the arrangement. "Chang Hong will sleep on the floor of my cabin."

The ship cleared the harbour and limped along on her northern course through the South China sea. Then she swung to the east through the Bashee channel off Hong Kong. On the eleventh day she anchored at Yokohama and presently little brown monkeys were swarming over her sides trailing in their wake great clouds of coal dust.

Accompanied by Chang Hong, Van Hoog went ashore the first day they were in port. He returned to the ship that evening. "I arranged for the insurance on the cargo," he informed Captain Vleet. "Two million dollars. The insurance people have no good opinion of this ship."

Four days later the ship nosed out of the harbour and began her five thousand mile run east to San Francisco. For the first week of the voyage Van Hoog spent much of his time in his stateroom and then at Chang Hong's suggestion a chair was placed on deck for the owner. Thereafter the blind man sat for an hour or two each day in the sunlight that painted the ship with colors invisible to his dead eyes.

The ship's officers berthed in quarters adjoining Van Hoog's stateroom. On the tenth day out of Yokohama, Van Hoog spoke for a while with Hagdorn, the mate. After the man had left him Van Hoog questioned Chang Hong. "What sort do you take him to be?"

"His eyes are blue and weak," Chang Hong replied. "His face is heavy and masks an infidel heart. He is a man who could be bought with money."

"Any man can be bought with money," Van Hoog returned. "You should have learned this from your San Francisco days."

Without replying Chang Hong regarded his employer.

Impatient at the silence Van Hoog repeated his statement. In his voice there was a challenge. "Any man can be bought with money."

This time the Chinaman answered. "I do not think that is the truth."

"For all of your forty years you are a child and a fool." A sneer lay on the blind man's lips. "Give me your arm. Pilot me among these stays and ladders and boats."

Chang Hong walked beside the blind man for an hour, adroitly steering him clear of collision with the gear that ranged about them. Vulf followed

behind the pair, free for the moment from the hateful restraint that forever bound him.

To the Chinaman beside him Van Hoog voiced his ambition for the days ahead. "Two million dollars!" he said, "two million dollars! That is a fortune, Chang Hong, a mountain of gold. I will keep it between me and the jungles of cane and never climb the mountain. Damn Java! You shall have your fling in San Francisco but afterward you must return to the heat and the hell of the island and I will laugh at you and spend money. Under the decks of this ship is a fortune,—sugar at twenty-four cents! Five thousand tons of it! It is mine and nothing can take away the gold that it stands for."

To himself Chang whispered a comment. "No man is greater than his grave. No man is larger than his coffin."

"What did you say?"

"Master, I cautioned you against the lifeboat beside us. Its side bulges out like the breast of a great fat duck."

"Lifeboat? A useless thing. The *Tegal* has always made her ports."

The curves about Chang Hong's mouth fixed with the shadow of irony. His eyes drifted aft to the wake of the ship and lifted to the western sky

whose lighter blue relieved the shadowed horizon. To himself he repeated the theme of his musing. "No man is greater than his grave, nor larger than his shroud."

Four days out of San Francisco the *Tegal*, steaming along at twelve knots, dropped two blades from her starboard propeller. Before the racing engines were throttled the ship swung along the arc of a great circle. Thereafter with her engineers fighting the main shaft which warped with the unbalanced torque occasioned by the missing blades, and with her helm well over to right her course, she steamed with a two-knot loss.

Late in the afternoon of the following day the sky lightened and the moving air about the ship quieted. Then the blue of the west inflamed to orange beneath the sun.

"It is hot," Van Hoog said suddenly to the Chinaman beside him.

"The breeze has died," Chang Hong returned. "The sky is clouded with evening colour."

"Red sky at night,—" the blind man voiced the quotation.

"It is not yet night," his companion replied. "It will be cooler presently. The distant water is broken by a breeze."

Following the Chinaman's words there came the first breath of moving air. Then the narrow gang-

ways of the deck about them were suddenly filled with running members of the crew.

Van Hoog spoke sharply to his companion. "Give me Vulf's chain. What is this damned clatter of feet which I hear?"

"Men of the crew are working about us. Just now they are lashing the boat covers with extra lines."

With the Chinaman's words Van Hoog became suddenly fearful of the impending gale. A cloud of sulphurous smoke which had trailed above the wake now fumed ahead over the ship.

Captain Vleet stepped out of the door of the chart room. He came beside Van Hoog. "I suggest, sir, that you remain inside for the rest of the day. A storm is beating up from the west."

"A storm?"

"A gale. We are on the edge of it—it is travelling with us."

By the time Captain Vleet had ceased speaking the wind from the west was shrieking through the stays. "Now sings the chorus from hell! Come Vulf!" Van Hoog reached for the mastiff's chain. He turned to Chang Hong. "Lead me."

The Chinaman guided the man to the door of his stateroom. "Sir, now your right foot will encounter the sill."

The ship rolled heavily. Van Hoog took three

involuntary steps and in spite of the support from Chang Hong's arm he collided violently with the framing of the berth before him.

Chang Hong shut the door against the wind and fixed the lock and latch. Even as he did so the crest of a green roller broke over the stern of the ship and a splash of salt spray drove forward, wind borne to the *Tegal's* lifting bow.

From the shock of the crashing waves and the shriek of the gale Van Hoog sought refuge in morphine. With the Chinaman watching beside him, for five hours he lay asleep with the weight of the drug heavy upon him.

At midnight the gale had moderated and while the ship rolled heavily on the following seas Van Hoog awakened. He spoke to Chang on guard beside him.

"Chang! Where are you. Where is Vulf?"

"We are here," the Chinaman answered. "The storm is dying. Captain Vleet was here an hour ago. Some boats are smashed and the wireless has carried away. Beyond that the ship is undamaged."

Van Hoog held a thin glass vial in his hands. In it were a dozen grey pellets. "You lived in fear of the storm," he said. "I crawled inside of this thin glass cave and escaped its terrors. You are a fool, Chang Hong. Ask Captain Vleet if the wireless can be fixed. Give me Vulf's chain while you are gone."

The Chinaman handed Van Hoog the end of the

mastiff's chain. In the driving rain he made his way to the bridge whereon he found the master of the ship. He transmitted Van Hoog's question.

"Tell him that tomorrow at daylight new antennæ—new wires will be rigged."

Chang Hong returned to Van Hoog with the information.

"As quickly as the wireless can pick up San Francisco I want a report on the sugar market," Van Hoog ordered. "In my sleep I saw great pyramids of sugar tumbling down a mountain side."

Van Hoog rolled to his side and with his face pillowed against the bulkhead which walled his berth he drifted again into the heavy stupor which is derived from the drug.

Chang Hong curled up on the floor and in a little while he too was asleep. His arm fell from about his face. The mastiff beside him reached out a great paw and laid it on Chang Hong's wrist. Then the dog slept but presently his sleep was broken and from his throat came a low growl. Chang Hong awakened instantly and felt the dog's paw on his wrist. He smiled. "Therefore, Vulf, you are greater than a man, for you can not be bought with money."

IV

At eleven o'clock the next day the wireless operator sent word to Captain Vleet that the apparatus was working. Captain Vleet instructed the messenger to tell Van Hoog that communication had been established.

"Tell the man to pick up San Francisco or any other city that will give him a market report. Get a sugar quotation."

Five minutes later the operator was tuning for a dozen stations in North America.

At noon Captain Vleet and the mate shot the sun and figured the ship's position. The master of the ship laid his course and instructions were relayed to the man at the wheel. Captain Vleet turned to the mate. "Mr. Hagdorn, tell the owner that we should pick up the Point Reyes light day after tomorrow evening."

Hagdorn knocked at the door of Van Hoog's stateroom. "On day after tomorrow we'll make the Point Reyes light, sir," he said to Van Hoog.

"Damn the Point Reyes light. Is the wireless working? What is sugar?"

The mate retreated in a blast of profanity. He halted on his way to the bridge long enough to stick his head into the wireless room. "All I can say to you," he said to the wireless man, "is to get hold

of a market report before the wild man turns his dog loose on you. He wants the price of sugar and he wants it quick."

The wireless operator replaced the receivers on his ears and resumed his monotonous exploration of the ether. An hour later he hooked a commercial station at Seattle where a good-natured young man interrupted his own work long enough to quote a paragraph from the market page of a morning paper.

On the yellow pad before him the *Tegal's* wireless man scribbled a note in the jargon of commerce:

"Cane granulated Base \$12.00. Fine standard coarse dry granulated, confectioners A and berry \$12.00. Powdered and high grade bar \$12.25. Cubes \$12.75.

The message was delivered to Van Hoog's stateroom. The man handed the message to Chang Hong. "Can you read English?"

Without waiting to reply the Chinaman plunged into the quotation. He read it through rapidly and then aloud he quoted one phrase before he was interrupted.

"Cane granulated base twelve dollars. Fine standard—"

Van Hoog struck his head violently against the framing of the corner post of his berth as he leaped to his feet. With difficulty he controlled his chattering jaws. From between his clenched teeth he shot a sentence at Chang Hong.

"Read that again, damn you! Read all of it!"

"Cane granulated base twelve dollars. Fine standard coarse dry granulated confectioners A and berry twelve dollars. Powdered and high grade bar twelve twenty-five. Cubes—"

The Chinaman's words were ended by a crashing blow from Van Hoog's clenched fist. Chang Hong shielded his face with his arm. Then from the mastiff's throat came a low snarl. Instinctively the Chinaman's restraining hand caught the collar around Vulf's neck.

"Out of here!" In his rage Van Hoog kicked wildly at the Chinaman. "Out of here, you yellow croaking fiend!" In the night of his blindness he rained blow after blow at Chang Hong.

The Chinaman edged his way toward the state-room door. "I am opening the door now. Be careful that your hands do not strike it." With Vulf at his side Chang Hong gained the freedom of the ship's deck and latched the door behind him. In the lee of the deckhouse wherein raged Van Hoog he sat down and waited. Across an expanse where the hulls of two lifeboats had shut the horizon from his view was now a clear space.

He gazed out upon the rolling waters and in his eyes where livid rage had flamed there rested tranquil shadows of resignation.

For an hour Van Hoog stormed within his state-room and then abruptly the excess of his speech quieted. Presently his calm voice came evenly from behind the closed door. "Chang!" he called, "Chang, come back, I would speak with you."

The Chinaman returned to his master's presence. "Find this man Hagdorn," Van Hoog directed, "Hagdorn, the mate of the ship, and bring him here. Where is Vulf?"

In a little while the Chinaman returned following behind the mate. He knocked upon Van Hoog's stateroom door. "It is I, Chang Hong," he answered in response to the inquiry that came from within.

Chang Hong and the mate entered the stateroom.

"Is there any one else near the door?" Van Hoog's voice was low.

"Sir, there is no one," the Chinaman answered.

"Hagdorn is with you? The mate of the ship?"

"Sir, yes."

There was a long moment in which the blind man's eyes seemed to rest upon the mate's face. Van Hoog breathed deeply, twice. "Hagdorn," he questioned, "would much danger attend shipwreck on this coast? In this sea? Danger to my life?"

Hagdorn looked at the man before him without replying to the question.

"Do you understand?" Van Hoog repeated. "Could this ship be wrecked without danger to my life?"

The mate turned his head toward the open ventilating panels in the door before he answered Van Hoog. "Wrecked, sir? Wrecked—without danger? There's half a sea following from the storm. She'd break up quick. The boats are smashed, three of them. She could go aground, yes, sir. You'd get off. In the lee of the hull there'd be easy water. We could lower a boat. Yes, sir."

"A ship is a ship, Hagdorn. Insurance—two millions is a fortune. Sugar has gone to hell! A false course, Hagdorn, orders to the steersman—"

"What words, sir! This Chink here is listening. There'd be men lost." The Mate looked again at the door as if longing to be free from the shackles of the interview.

The lines about Van Hoog's mouth were suddenly graven as in steel. "Life—Hagdorn, life is cheap. Gold! That is the precious thing. A false course to the man at the wheel. Care in landing me safely ashore. How much?"

Horror sounded deep in Hagdorn's protest. "Never to sail again! And my mate's papers. I'd be done for!"

"A thousand dollars, Hagdorn—five thousand." The blind man got to his feet and unbuckled a

snakelike belt from about his waist. He felt for an open space upon the bed and an instant later the belt vomited a cone of gold coin. Van Hoog unbuckled a leather flap from a surface pocket of the belt and from it he removed a thick package of banknotes. He spoke to the Chinaman. "Count this. How much is here, Chang Hong?"

The Chinaman riffled the ends of the crisp bills under his thumb. "The Yokohama bank paid five thousand. It is here."

Van Hoog repeated his offer to the mate. "Ten thousand dollars, Hagdorn. You could live for ten years."

The mate gulped deeply once and then, "Double it," he said. His hands clenched.

Van Hoog addressed the Chinaman. "Your money belt, Chang Hong. Currency enough to make his price. Twenty thousand dollars in American money."

Obedient to Van Hoog's dictation Chang Hong retrieved from the belt about his waist all of the gold therein and covered it with a thick bundle of currency.

He poured the gold beside the heap upon the bed and put the currency in Van Hoog's hand. "Sir," he protested, "this is murder."

On his words Van Hoog struck at him. From the Chinaman's lips where the blow had found its

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mark there trickled two thin streams of blood. "Damn you—that word! Keep your yellow mouth shut!"

The blind man sought quickly to confirm the agreement by which the mate had become his accomplice in their black enterprise. "There on the bed is the gold, Hagdorn. Here is a strong leather belt for it. Here is the currency—twenty thousand. You can live like a king. A word to the man at the wheel, a point or two off the course—then let the *Tegal* pound her way to hell! But get me off when she strikes."

With the heavy belt about his waist and with the banknotes secure in his pocket the mate left Van Hoog's stateroom. After he had gone Van Hoog addressed Chang Hong.

"Can you hear me?"

"Sir, I can hear you."

"Chang Hong, some day I shall kill you. I would kill you now except that I shall need you to guide me through the surf. I promise you that some day after I am off this ship and safe I shall kill you."

The Chinaman wiped away four drops of blood which had coagulated upon his lips.

"Sir,—yes," he answered simply. "Once you gave me life." Then to himself, "Fate plans for a fool—and I am a fool."

V

An hour before the grey of dawn had melted the veil of fog which hung above the red rock cliffs of the California coast, the *Tegal* struck. With the slash of the first thin fangs of the reef beneath her bows the great steel fabric pulsed throughout its length in terror of the impending instant of destruction.

A fifty foot course of plates sheared and curled like wet paper against the rock. Then impelled by her dead weight and the mass of her cargo the ship leaped heavily at the rocks beneath her. The main steam lines cracked under a sudden stress and a cloud of live steam bloomed from the ventilators that dived to the engine room wherein six men faced death. In the tangled gear the wireless spluttered a single call. Then with the fading lights that died with the flooding dynamo, the wires were mute.

In the darkness Van Hoog braced himself against the framing of the open door of his stateroom. He called loudly into the night.

"Chang!"

The Chinaman's voice rose above the tumult.

"Sir, I am here."

"Get me to the boat."

"The boat is over the side and smashed. Come! A jump to the water and I will guide you."

Together Van Hoog and the Chinaman leaped into the tide which surged beneath them. The mastiff, his chain hanging, hesitated for a second and then dived after them.

The dog found the swimming pair in the water and struck out beside them for the shore.

Half way to the beach Chang Hong felt the impact of a rush of air about his head and then the sea around him was filled with falling fragments that had lifted with the ship's exploding boilers. Ahead of him he saw a third man swimming. Hampered as he was by the drag of Van Hoog's hand upon his shoulder the Chinaman gained and came abreast of this third swimmer. The unknown reached out a desperate hand and clutched Van Hoog. With a snarl of fear the blind man sought to shake off this new peril. He tightened his grip upon Chang Hong and then the Chinaman realized that under this added weight of the third man he must meet his death.

"Here then is the end of life," he thought. "Fate plans for a fool."

Into the spray which swept about him, lifting high above the crash of the sea, he called loudly to some unseen Being and his words were in the language of his ancestors. Then he became conscious of a plunging form in the sea ahead of him and he saw the swimming mastiff leaping toward him. The red

rage in the dog's eyes made Chang Hong cry out again, but his command to Vulf was lost in a choking dash of spray. An instant later the dog was upon the clutching blind man, tearing savagely at his wrist. A ghastly strangling shriek came from Van Hoog as his hand was torn from the Chinaman. The blind man grasped convulsively at the third man beside him. A second cry of wild despair echoed upon Van Hoog's dying wail. It was the voice of the mate. Hagdorn sank to his death, dragged deep beneath the blood-tainted waters by the weight of Van Hoog's gold, struggling in the blind man's death clutch.

The surf beat about Chang Hong's shoulders and then he was thrown heavily to the sand. The next breaker lifted him and when the wave had passed he filled his lungs with a great gulp of air and staggered toward the red cliffs which rose before him. The foam of the next breaker whirled at his knees but he was safe now, and in his hand was the mastiff's leading chain.

On the shore the Chinaman spoke gently to the dog. "Come, Vulf," he said, "it is finished. We are free."

He took the leather collar from about the mastiff's neck. He threw the collar and its hanging chain away from him. "Vulf," he said, "there are some ties in life stronger than links of steel."







